

The Eclipse of Liberal Protestantism in the Netherlands

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The Eclipse of Liberal Protestantism in the Netherlands

*Religious, Social, and International Perspectives on the
Dutch Modernist Movement (1870-1940)*

By

Tom-Eric Krijger



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This book is printed on acid-free paper and produced in a sustainable manner.

To my parents



A minha pátria é a minha língua

FERNANDO PESSOA

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Preface

Notes to Reader

To transform the doctoral dissertation that I defended at the University of Groningen in 2017 into the book that you are reading now, I had to abridge my manuscript, either by rewriting several paragraphs in a more compendious way or by 'killing' my 'darlings'. This last alteration applies to the notes and glosses in particular. The number of references to historical newspapers has been reduced. Furthermore, many an elaborative footnote has disappeared. As a result, perhaps to the disappointment of those (including myself) who are fond of *petites histoires*, exposés on, for example, obscure associations such as the *Vereeniging tot weder-uitgave van mystieke geschriften uit vroegere eeuwen* (Association for the Reissuing of Mystical Texts from Bygone Centuries) and the *Bond van Religieuze Anarcho-Communisten* (League of Religious Anarchist Communists), Buddhism in the Dutch League of Protestants, and branches of this league outside of the Netherlands have not made the cut. Finally, all texts of quotations originally written in languages other than English have been removed from the footnotes. All translations of these quotes into English are my own.

Please note that, to avoid confusion, articles published in daily newspapers or weekly journals are referred to in the footnotes in full both the first time they are mentioned *and* every time thereafter. Particularly in written media issued before 1940, many articles were published as small feuillets or contained similar headings. If the author of an anonymously published article can be identified contextually with absolute certainty, his or her name is placed between square brackets. If a person is quoted or paraphrased in an article written by someone else, his or her name is placed between square brackets together with the addition 'in:'. If its author is unknown, only the heading of an article is given. Masculine personal pronouns include their feminine counterparts in the limited number of cases in which they are used in a general sense. I would like to accentuate that there is no gender bias behind this choice in any way.

Like everyone writing in English on Dutch history, I had to make sure that the meaning of Dutch words and language-specific particularities would not get 'lost in translation'. Non-English words are consistently written in italics. A literal translation of non-English names of periodicals and associations is given the first time these periodicals and associations are mentioned. Throughout the rest of the text, the original names are used in their original

spelling (hence, for instance, *vereeniging* instead of *vereniging*). Particularly in the context of Dutch Protestantism, many difficulties arise in translating terms into English. Some terms, such as *evangelisch* and *ethisch* (both of which refer to theological-ecclesiological currents), cannot be properly translated at all. To overcome this problem, a definition is given the first time they are used. For other terms, English equivalents exist that might not be entirely accurate, but have commonly been used in historiography nonetheless. Examples include 'neo-Calvinist' in reference to the *Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland* (Reformed Churches in the Netherlands), 'Mennonite' when speaking of the *doopsgezinden*, and 'Dutch Reformed Church' as a translation of *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk*. While 'Reformed' as such usually denotes Calvinism in general, 'liberal Reformed' specifically refers to the *vrijzinnige* current within the Dutch Reformed Church. The terms 'modernist' and 'liberal Protestant' are more or less used interchangeably throughout the text, although, as explained in chapter 3, the latter is used more often as a translation of the term *vrijzinnig* that gradually came to replace the designation *modern* in Dutch Protestantism as of 1900. The term 'denomination' is a translation of the Dutch noun *kerkverband*. Finally, for the sake of consistency, the word 'church' is only capitalised in names of specific denominations and congregations, not in reference to the church as institution in general or the entire body of Christians.

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Historians would make great hermits, as localising and reading sources, spending months in a row in archives and libraries, and taking up their pens day after day from dawn till dark require the same kind of self-discipline and solitude that are called for in anchoritic life. Fortunately, however, many people have accompanied me from the moment this book was conceived to its actual completion. I would like to express my gratitude to them for everything they have done for me.

Professor Mirjam de Baar, who has supervised the PhD research on which this book is based, and as such has been my mentor during my PhD studies in Groningen, has given feedback on draft chapters of my dissertation with an admirable devotion and astonishing thoroughness, has continuously and enthusiastically supported me as my *Doktormutter*, and has offered me the opportunity to start my post-PhD career at Leiden University. Professor Hans-Martin Kirn has read the entire manuscript of my dissertation in his role of second supervisor.

Professor Ernestine van der Wall has meticulously read the manuscript as well, providing me with countless essential comments and suggestions, and

helping me to formulate the perfect subtitle for this book. Ever since my move from the University of Groningen to Leiden University, she has enabled me to develop myself as a scholar and lecturer in numerous ways, and has assumed the role of my academic 'sparring partner', becoming my mentor in post-PhD life.

Wies Houweling and Elsbeth Goettsch of *Vrijzinnigen Nederland*, an association that used to be called *Nederlandse Protestantenbond* and prominently figures in this book, have enabled me to access, and make use of, the archives of this association without restrictions. Many who are involved in *Vrijzinnigen Nederland* have shown interest in my research on the history of Dutch liberal Protestantism, leading some of them to invite me to present the conclusions set forth in this book in local branches of their association. Showing interest in my work as well, editors and book reviewers of newspapers and journals such as *Elsevier*, the *Friesch Dagblad*, *Kerk en Theologie*, the *Nederlands Dagblad*, the *Reformatisch Dagblad*, *Sofie*, the *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis*, *Trouw*, and the *VPRO-Gids* have brought my PhD research to the attention of the general public.

The *Stichting 'De Honderd Gulden Reis'* has financially contributed to a research stay at Harvard University in early 2015. There, Prof. Daniel P. McKanan and Prof. Gary L. Dorrien have allowed me to take some of their classes, and to discuss literature on, and my views of, the history of liberal Protestantism during tutorials. Together with Barbara Boles, they have created the preconditions that enabled me to have a great, and productive, time across the Atlantic; in fact, the structure and central argument of this book took definite shape at Harvard. In early 2016, due to a generous fellowship grant of the Scalliger Institute, I was able to consult several archives of Dutch liberal Protestant theologians preserved at Leiden University.

The Reverend Professor Christopher T. Begg, who is working on a biography of Dutch liberal Protestant theologian Abraham Kuenen, has been so kind to proofread the entire manuscript, giving valuable suggestions and correcting language errors. Dr Jan Wim Buisman has suggested having a revised version of my dissertation reviewed as part of Brill's Series in Church History and Religious Culture. Ingrid Heijckers-Velt and series editors Prof. Fred van Lieburg and Prof. Wim Janse have given important suggestions for turning my dissertation into this book. An anonymous peer reviewer has offered additional feedback, helping me to finalise the manuscript.

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My teachers and fellow students in Utrecht and Brussels, my students and colleagues in Groningen and Leiden (of whom I would like to mention Dr Karin Neutel and Henk van Putten in particular), fellow historians in the Netherlands and abroad, and my friends have all, in various ways and at various times, contributed to the development of my ideas, and given me their encouragement and companionship. Dr Joana Serrado deserves a special word of thanks for her continuing support and friendship ever since our first encounter in Groningen. I am also grateful for the encouragements of Cristina Morais.

My family has been my help and stay ever since my birth. My sister Kim has always shown her care for me, and her interest in my academic pursuits. My parents René and Antoinette have supported me in too many ways to mention, encouraging and enabling me to pursue my interests, sympathising with me, and giving me advice and guidance in life. I dedicate this book to them.

Tom-Eric Krijger

Leiden, on the 473rd anniversary of Martin Luther's death
(18 February 2019)

Abbreviations

Names of Organisations

	Full name in original language	Full name in English
AEPMV	<i>Allgemeine evangelisch-protestantische Missionsverein</i>	General Protestant Missionary Society
ARP	<i>Anti-Revolutionaire Partij</i>	Anti-Revolutionary Party
AUA		American Unitarian Association
AVRO	<i>Algemeene Vereeniging Radio-Omroep</i>	General Radio Broadcasting Corporation
BCS	<i>Bond van Christen-Socialisten</i>	League of Christian Socialists
BFUA		British and Foreign Unitarian Association
BVL	<i>Bond van Vrije Liberalen</i>	League of Free Liberals
CC	<i>Centrale Commissie v/h Vrijzinnig Protestantisme</i>	Central Commission for Liberal Protestantism
CHU	<i>Christelijk-Historische Unie</i>	Christian Historical Union
CPN	<i>Communistische Partij van Nederland</i>	Communist Party of the Netherlands
GKN	<i>Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland</i>	Reformed Churches in the Netherlands
HDO	<i>Hilversumsche Draadlooze Omroep</i>	Hilversum Wireless Broadcasting Corporation
IARF	<i>Internationaal Verbond voor Vrijzinnig Christendom en Geloofsvrijheid</i>	International Association for Liberal Christianity and Religious Freedom
KRO	<i>Katholieke Radio-Omroep</i>	Catholic Radio Broadcasting Corporation
NCRV	<i>Nederlandsche Christelijke Radio-Vereeniging</i>	Dutch Christian Radio Broadcasting Association
NCSV	<i>Nederlandsche Christen-Studenten Vereeniging</i>	Dutch Christian Student Association
NHK	<i>Nederlandsche Hervormde Kerk</i>	Dutch Reformed Church
NPB	<i>Nederlandsche Protestantenbond</i>	Dutch League of Protestants
NSF	<i>Nederlandsche Seintoestellenfabriek</i>	Dutch Transmitter Factory
NZG	<i>Nederlandsch Zendeling-Genootschap</i>	Dutch Missionary Society

P K N I	<i>Protestantsche Kerk in Nederlandsch-Indië</i>	Protestant Church in the Dutch East Indies
RSV	<i>Religieus-Socialistisch Verbond</i>	Religious Socialist League
SDAP	<i>Sociaal-Democratische Arbeiderspartij</i>	Social Democratic Workers' Party
SDB	<i>Sociaal-Democratische Bond</i>	Social Democratic League
SSR	<i>Societas Studiosorum Reformatorum</i>	Reformed Student Society
USA		United States of America
VARA	<i>Vereeniging van Arbeiders Radio-Amateurs</i>	Association of Workers' Radio Amateurs
VCJB	<i>Vrijzinnig-Christelijke Jongerenbond</i>	Liberal Christian Youth League
VCJC	<i>Vrijzinnig-Christelijke Jeugdcentrale</i>	Liberal Christian Youth Centre
VCJGB	<i>Vrijzinnig-Christelijke Jeugdgemeenschappenbond</i>	Liberal Christian League of Youth Communities
VCL	<i>Vrijzinnig-Christelijk Lyceum</i>	Liberal Christian Grammar School
VCSB	<i>Vrijzinnig-Christelijke Studentenbond</i>	Liberal Christian League of Students
VDB	<i>Vrijzinnig-Democratische Bond</i>	Liberal Democratic League
VPRO	<i>Vrijzinnig-Protestantsche Radio-Omroep</i>	Liberal Protestant Radio Broadcasting Corporation
VVD	<i>Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie</i>	People's Party for Freedom and Democracy
VVH	<i>Vereeniging van Vrijzinnige Hervormden</i>	Association of Reformed Liberals

Bibliographical Abbreviations

BLGNP	<i>Biografisch Lexicon voor de Geschiedenis van het Nederlandse Protestantisme</i>
BMGN	<i>Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden</i>
BNPP	<i>Bibliografie van Nederlandse Protestantse Periodieken</i>
BPL	<i>Bibliothecae Publicae Latini</i>
IISG	<i>Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis</i>
NL-AsdSAA	<i>Stadsarchief Amsterdam</i>
NL-HaNA	<i>Nationaal Archief, The Hague</i>
NL-HtBHIC	<i>Brabants Historisch Informatiecentrum, 's-Hertogenbosch</i>
NL-UtHUA	<i>Het Utrechts Archief</i>
UBL	<i>Universiteitsbibliotheek Leiden</i>

Introduction

1 Modernising Christianity and Christianising Modern Society

In 1900, the neo-Calvinist theologian Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920) wrote that “the press has been for a long time, and is becoming ever more, one of the great forces that control political and social developments.”¹ It might seem a provocation to introduce a book on modernist or liberal Protestantism in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Netherlands by quoting Kuyper.² After all, Kuyper presented himself as one of liberal Protestants’ fiercest antagonists, which he did by using the press. However, granting him the first words in this study is not meant to be provocative, for his awareness that the press could greatly influence politics and society perfectly characterises the spirit of the age, an age that the media scholar J.M.H.J. Hemels has christened ‘the golden age’ of the Dutch periodical press.³ After the abolition of a special newspaper tax in 1869, the press took over the role of reading clubs, debating societies, and gentlemen’s associations as the primary arena in which the battle of ideas was fought in the Netherlands.⁴ It would continue to be so until the emergence of the radio in the late 1920s.⁵ Due to newspapers and magazines, latent differences of opinion between, and within, groups of Protestants were brought into the open and to the attention of people all across the country, which largely contributed to the rise of organised movements. In the Dutch context, Kuyper’s neo-Calvinists were one of these movements, modernists or liberal Protestants another.

1 J.M.H.J. Hemels, ‘De pers als “een der groote machten” ofwel het late gelijk van dr. Abraham Kuyper’, *De Negentiende Eeuw* xv.2 (1991), 53-69, here 53.

2 In Dutch, ‘liberal Protestant’ is either referred to with the adjectives *modern* or *vrijzinnig*. Chapter 3 deals with this matter in more detail. The Dutch adjective *liberaal* is hardly ever used in reference to what is called ‘liberal Protestantism’ in English, ‘*protestantisme libéral*’ in French, and ‘*Liberalprotestantismus*’ in German. In the context of Dutch Protestantism, *liberaal* usually applies to post-Enlightenment theology in the early nineteenth century. See, e.g.: J. Vree, ‘The Dominating Theology within the Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk after 1815 in its Relation to the Secession of 1834’, in: G. Harinck and J.L. Krabbendam (eds.), *Breaches and Bridges. Reformed Subcultures in the Netherlands, Germany and the United States* (Amsterdam 2000), 33-47, here 37.

3 Hemels, ‘De pers als “een der groote machten”’, 53.

4 J.M.H.J. Hemels, *De Nederlandse pers voor en na de afschaffing van het dagbladzegel in 1869* (Assen [1969]).

5 R.L. Schuurisma, *Jaren van opgang. Nederland 1900-1930* ([Amsterdam 2000]), 208.

Regarding the opportunities that the press offered, liberal Protestants fully agreed with Kuiper. Ever since the first vague contours of a 'modernist movement' became apparent in the late 1850s, the need for a modernist opinion magazine therefore made itself felt. After a short-lived attempt ten years beforehand, such a magazine was issued as of 1869. Originally called '*Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad*' ('*New Ecclesial Weekly*'), it was renamed '*De Hervorming*' ('*The Reformation*') in January 1873. Accounting for the name change, its then editors-in-chief B.C.J. Mosselmans (1830-1911) and J. van Gilse (1836-1917) stated that modernists no longer had to preoccupy themselves with justifying their presence in church life. They felt that orthodox Protestants who still challenged modernists' ecclesial rights were fighting a rearguard action; the further dissemination of modernist conceptions of God, Jesus, and Scripture was simply unstoppable. And yet, liberal Protestants had no reason to be satisfied. "We want to go further and we want more," Mosselmans and Van Gilse exclaimed. Modernists should not rest until they had realised "the Kingdom of God, [...] a new earth filled with justice," as such completing the work that the sixteenth-century Reformation had begun. Mosselmans and Van Gilse incited modernists to bring, so to speak, a '*second Reformation*' into force, to which the new name of their magazine alluded. To do so, church life had to be rebuilt in such a way that individuals could internalise the 'true spirit of Jesus', which modernist theology was retrieving from under the verbatim text of Scripture and creeds. In addition, social life had to be imbued with this true spirit of Jesus, in order to eradicate social evils that stemmed from a lack of knowledge, piety, and moral sense. In other words, Mosselmans and Van Gilse wanted the modernist movement to modernise Christianity and to permeate society with this modernised, non-supernatural Christianity, or, in short, to truly Christianise society.⁶

Already in 1870, a voluntary association had come into being that pursued this goal: the *Nederlandsche Protestantenbond* (Dutch League of Protestants or NPB). As it was formulated in its first constitution, the NPB aimed to "preserve, and further, the free expression of individual Christian religious life in the churches," and "stimulate the development of Christian life in individuals

6 [B.C.J. Mosselmans and J. van Gilse], 'Nieuwjaarsgroet', *De Hervorming* 1873-01 (2 January 1873), 1-2, here 1. Compare the first editorial article of *De Hervorming* with that of the modernist magazine *De Protestant*, issued between 1883 and 1887. Just like Mosselmans and Van Gilse, the editors of *De Protestant*, I. Hooykaas, A.P.G. Jorissen (1830-1905), H.C. Lohr, and J.H. Maronier, had the "firm conviction that a good deal of what requires reformation in church and state, in society, schools and households will get [the reformation it requires] when those [modernist] principles exert their influence more generally." Quoted from: 'Wat wij willen', *De Protestant* 1.1 (6 January 1883), 1-2, here 1.

and families.”⁷ In an 1871 brochure, the Dutch Reformed minister J.F. Corstius (1819-1888) explained how this could be realised. Church regulations should be as limited as possible, containing only some elementary code of order, but certainly no references to creeds or prescriptions on religious services. As orthodox fanaticism irrevocably resulted in “the decay of society,” religious life should be able to float without being doctrinally straitjacketed. The NPB, Corstius declared, aspired to “make society more truly free in the spirit of Christ,” in order for Christians to fully live up to Christ’s incitement to be “the salt of the earth,” and thus to promote social welfare and popular development.⁸

Three years later, W. Zaalberg (1835-1906), who had recently renounced his position as a minister in the Dutch Reformed Church, encouraged liberal-minded Protestants in the Overijssel town of Deventer to join the NPB by defining the aim of the association as follows:

Being an association for public advancement in the sphere of religion and the church, [the NPB] wants to let many share in the blessed triumphs of science, applied to ethical-religious life. That way, it wants to contribute to the ennoblement of our nation’s existence in households and society as well as to the formation of a church community built upon the principles of free Protestantism – a church community that can again be the salt of society.⁹

All impediments to this, Zaalberg made clear, had to be removed. What should accordingly be done, was to get rid of creedalism, dogmatism, ritualism, and the belief in supernaturalism on the one hand, and increase individuals’ general education, sense of duty, sense of values, self-reliance, and autonomy on the other.

Among its first leaders, including Zaalberg, there was no doubt that the NPB would succeed in “advancing the free development of religious life,” as its aim was reformulated in 1872.¹⁰ This firm conviction reflects the eschatological, evolutionary, and optimistic belief in progress and human perfectibility that was so typical of the nineteenth century. This belief, in turn, was fostered by technological innovations (such as the construction of railroads, telephony, and telegraphy), scientific breakthroughs (such as the theory of evolution and a better understanding of pathological and psychological processes), scholarly

7 A.H. van der Hoeve, ‘De Nederlandsche Protestantenvbond’, in: *Wegwijzer naar en in den Nederlandschen Protestantenvbond* (s.l. [1925]), 7-17, here 7.

8 J.F. Corstius, *Het Witte Kruis of de Protestantenvbond in Nederland* (Dokkum 1871), 4, 12-17.

9 W. Zaalberg, *De Nederlandsche Protestantenvbond* (Deventer 1874), 15.

10 *Doel en werkring van den Nederlandschen Protestantenvbond* (Amsterdam 1885), 1.

novelties (such as archaeological discoveries and new heuristic and hermeneutical methods), globalisation, nationalism, and economic and political liberalism, which all challenged a Christianity rooted in a pre-modern worldview and a pre-modern form of society. Modernists therefore feared that Christianity would lose its significance and credibility in the age to come if it would not adapt to such developments, in both its form (the church) and content (theology). To prevent social life from turning into a survival of the fittest and a struggle for material gain, and culture from becoming decadent and immoral, Jesus, in whose life modernists saw true humanity reflected, should remain the spiritual guide in society and culture. The motive by which the modernist movement was driven was hence an apologetic one.¹¹ Modernists were not the only ones in the late nineteenth century who felt that if Christianity and society would not be reformed (and in such a way that a continuous cross-fertilisation between the two could take place), then the gap between them would eventually become unbridgeable, to the detriment of both. In the context of Dutch Protestantism, for example, the *gereformeerden* or neo-Calvinists gathered round Abraham Kuyper had similar aims to bring Calvinist orthodoxy 'in rapport' with the present day, and to 're-Christianise' society. They even made the same claim as modernists to carry forward the work of the sixteenth-century Reformation, albeit for different reasons: neo-Calvinists wanted to hold on to Calvinist theological principles and make Calvinism trend-setting (again) in Dutch church and social life.¹²

Analysing how liberal Protestants in the Netherlands have pursued 'the free development of religious life' (that is, what they have said and done with regard to church and social reform), this book deals with the development of the Dutch modernist movement (the *moderne richting* or the more or less organised community of liberal Protestants in the Netherlands) in religious, ecclesial, social, cultural, and political life between, broadly speaking, 1870 and 1940. As explained below, it puts forward a new interpretation of Dutch liberal Protestant history, answering the question of why the endeavour to modernise

11 M.F. Buitenwerf-van der Molen, *God van vooruitgang. De popularisering van het modern-theologische gedachtegoed in Nederland (1857-1880)* (Hilversum 2007), 196-197.

12 See, e.g.: J. Hendriks, *De emancipatie van de gereformeerden. Sociologische bijdrage tot de verkenning van enige kenmerken van het huidige gereformeerde volksdeel* (Alphen aan den Rijn 1971), 94-156, 212; D.Th. Kuiper (J. de Bruijn, J.G.M. de Bruijn and G.J. Schutte eds.), *Tussen observatie en participatie. Twee eeuwen gereformeerde en antirevolutionaire wereld in ontwikkelingsperspectief* (Hilversum 2002), 112-115; C.M. van Driel, 'Modernisme', in: G. Harinck, H.J. Paul and B.T. Wallet (eds.), *Het gereformeerde geheugen. Protestantse herinneringsculturen in Nederland* (Amsterdam 2009), 223-232, here 223; T.E.M. Krijger, 'Was Abraham Kuyper een fundamentalist? Het neocalvinisme langs de fundamentalistische meetlat', *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift* LXIX.3 (2015), 190-210, here 203-206.

Christianity and to Christianise modern society did not come up to modernists' initial expectations.

2 Methodological Considerations

This book covers the decades between 1870 and 1940, because 1870 was the year in which the Dutch League of Protestants was founded, and this time frame as a whole more or less spans the existence of *De Hervorming* and its short-lived predecessor *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad*, issued between 1869 and 1934. Although its structure as a national federation of local branches, the relatively low membership fee it charged, and its commitment to a bourgeois 'civilising offensive' could hardly be called innovative – these characteristics also applied, for example, to the *Maatschappij tot Nut van 't Algemeen* (Society for Public Advancement), founded almost a century earlier –, the NPB nonetheless exemplified a new kind of group formation: it was one of the first associations in Dutch civil society that was explicitly intended to be a mass organisation *and* promoted the interests of a *volksdeel* (part of the population) with shared religious principles. Its founding had been made possible due to developments such as improved means of communication and transportation,¹³ a strong rise in population, an increase in opportunities to devote time to club life, and tendencies to socialise with like-minded people only.¹⁴ The NPB brought into being, and gave shape to, an 'imagined community' of liberal Protestants all across the country: it gave its members a sense of belonging to a nationwide group of co-religionists, of whom they would only come to know a few in person.¹⁵

The modernist movement in the Netherlands and the NPB did not coincide. Dutch liberal Protestants were scattered over the *Nederlandsche Hervormde*

13 The effects thereof on the development of Dutch orthodox Protestantism are analysed in: D.Th. Kuiper and J. Vree (eds.), *Het liep op rolletjes. De eenwording van protestants-christelijk Nederland per rail 1839-1939* (Zoetermeer 2007).

14 B.M.A. de Vries, 'Een eeuw vol gezelligheid. Verenigingsleven in Nederland, 1800-1900', *Documentatieblad voor de Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis na 1800* XXVIII.63 (December 2005), 16-29, here 24-29; B.M.A. de Vries, 'Van deftigheid en volksopvoeding naar massacultuur. Het Amsterdamse verenigingsleven in de negentiende eeuw', in: M. Vrolijk et al. (eds.), *Jaarboek van het Genootschap Amstelodamum* XCVIII (Amsterdam 2006), 82-105, here 98-102.

15 B.R.O'G. Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York [1983] 2006), 6. The concept of imagined communities is applied to Dutch orthodox Protestantism in: J.M. Houkes, *Christelijke vaderlanders. Godsdienst, burgerschap en de Nederlandse natie 1850-1900* (Amsterdam 2009), esp. 130.

Kerk (Dutch Reformed Church), including the Francophone Walloon Reformed congregations that were part of it, the *Remonstrantsche Broederschap* (Remonstrant Brotherhood), the *Algemeene Doopsgezinde Sociëteit* (General Mennonite Society), the *Evangelisch-Luthersche Kerk* (Evangelical Lutheran Church), and the *Vrije Gemeente* (Free Congregation) in Amsterdam, all of which were, just like the NPB, imagined communities in their own right. Moreover, a minority of liberal Protestants did not belong to any church. As the NPB was legally a voluntary association instead of a church denomination, its members could retain their church membership, which most of them did.¹⁶ The majority of the NPB members remained in the Dutch Reformed Church, to which not only most Protestants, but also most *liberal* Protestants in the Netherlands belonged.¹⁷ This meant that the majority of those who were part of the imagined community that was the NPB identified at the same time with the imagined community that was the Dutch Reformed Church, of which also the greater number of orthodox Protestants in the Netherlands were members. In addition, far from all Dutch modernists joined the NPB. The association grew from 1,400 members and 26 branches in 1871 to more than 22,000 members and 165 branches at its peak at around 1920,¹⁸ but the Dutch Reformed Church alone is said to have had more than 600,000 modernist members (out of a total of nearly three million members).¹⁹ For all of these reasons, it is inaccurate to study the modernist movement in terms of an imagined community.

However, the NPB does provide for the best point of departure for research on the Dutch modernist movement at large, in its capacity as an association in the name of which *De Hervorming* was issued. Taking this magazine as the starting point of our research, I follow historian Herman Paul's suggestion to approach the modernist movement in terms of a 'discourse community', which he defines as "a group of people who discuss their shared interests

16 B.D. Eerdmans, *Kerk en kerkgaan* XIV. *De Nederlandsche Protestantenvbond* (Huis ter Heide [1930]), 3-5.

17 In 1927, the Evangelical Lutheran minister D. Drijver estimated that seven out of eight modernists belonged to the Dutch Reformed Church. See: D. Drijver, 'Binnenland', *De Hervorming* 1927-03 (1 March 1927), 21-22, here 22.

18 T.E.M. Krijger, 'De organisatorische spin in het vrijzinnige web. De netwerkfunctie van de Nederlandse Protestantenvbond binnen het vrijzinnig-protestantisme op lokaal, nationaal en internationaal niveau', in: C.M. van Driel and J.M. Houkes (eds.), *Het vrijzinnige web. Verkenningen naar vrijzinnig-protestantse netwerken (1850-1914)* (Zoetermeer 2014), 39-66, here 60.

19 H. Knippenberg, *De religieuze kaart van Nederland. Omvang en geografische spreiding van de godsdienstige gezindten vanaf de Reformatie tot heden* (Assen 1992), 109; H. te Winkel, 'De "vrijzinnige richting" binnen de Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk. Een kwantitatieve studie naar haar invloed tussen 1925 en 2000', *Documentatieblad voor de Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis na 1800* XXX.67 (December 2007), 40-59, here 43.

through written communication and are recognizable as a community only through their channels of communication.”²⁰ As the NPB brought together liberal Protestants across denominational lines and manifested itself in both church and social life, voices welling up from every corner of the modernist movement and dealing with all modernist concerns found expression in *De Hervorming*. All modernist opinion leaders, Dutch Reformed or otherwise, were closely associated with the NPB. In fact, the NPB gave one the opportunity to become an opinion leader in modernist circles in the first place, as, due to its interdenominational and hybrid character, there was no other magazine with as much reach in these circles as *De Hervorming*. In turn, if one wanted to gain a clear and representative image of what was going on in these circles, *De Hervorming* was the magazine to read. Yet *De Hervorming* not only mirrored, but also profoundly influenced what was going on in the modernist movement at large. In a general sense, it fostered ‘sociability’, which the Dutch studies scholar Willem van den Berg describes as “the need for institutionally embedded social interaction, the cultivation of contacts with kindred spirits, and, in line with this, the tendency to undertake activities in a group context instead of on an individual basis.”²¹ As we shall see, many a discussion or initiative among Dutch liberal Protestants started in *De Hervorming*.

Hence, whereas the NPB embodied an all-modernist imagined community, having a central position within the modernist movement, this movement itself can most adequately be called a discourse community centred around *De Hervorming*.²² As Paul explains, “discourse communities can overlap, interact and be part of larger communities. Socialist modernism, for example, can be conceived of as a discourse community gathered around *De Blijde Wereld* (*The Joyous World*). But this community, in turn, was part of a larger modernist discourse community, associated with *De Hervorming*.”²³ In other words, smaller, faction-based discourse communities such as the one making use of *De*

20 H.J. Paul, ‘Religious Discourse Communities. Confessional Differentiation in Nineteenth-Century Dutch Protestantism’, *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Religions- und Kulturgeschichte* CI (2007), 107–122, here 112.

21 W. van den Berg, ‘Sociabiliteit, genootschappelijkheid en de orale cultus’, in: M. Spies (ed.), *Historische letterkunde. Facetten van vakbeoefening* (Groningen 1984), 151–170, here 154. In 2010, the historian M.P.A. de Baar suggested using *De Hervorming* to study sociability in Dutch liberal Protestant circles. See: M.P.A. de Baar, *Religie en feminisme in de negentiende eeuw. Het unitarisme als inspiratiebron* (Groningen 2010), 26, 39, note 73.

22 Following Paul, the historian A. de Lange approaches the burgeoning modernist movement between 1858 and 1859 as a discourse community grouped round the magazine *Teekenen des Tijds* (dealt with in chapter 2). See: A. de Lange, “Hij is een man van fantasie”. J.H. Gunning jr. en de modernen in de jaren 1850’, in: Van Driel and Houkes (eds.), *Het vrijzinnige web*, 21–38, here 35.

23 Paul, ‘Religious Discourse Communities’, 115.

Blijde Wereld were embedded in one all-encompassing discourse community of which *De Hervorming* was the mouthpiece. *De Hervorming* was thus the magazine into which all of the smaller discourse communities existing within the modernist movement at large entered into discussion with each other. The NPB provided modernists with a communal, and arguably their most important, yet not their *only* channel of communication. For this reason, an in-depth analysis of *De Hervorming* has merely laid the foundation of, and has been integrated in, a much broader analysis that includes many other (liberal Protestant) periodicals and literature as well. This broader analysis makes it possible to identify a liberal Protestant 'cultural pattern' – that is, the values, norms, and behaviours among Dutch modernists and the way(s) in which these were given concrete shape.²⁴

The periodical press has long been neglected as both source and object of study in Dutch historiography.²⁵ As (Dutch) liberal Protestantism lacks the tradition of partisan history writing that is so characteristic of the formerly 'pillarised' communities of neo-Calvinists and Roman Catholics in the Netherlands (about which more is said below), liberal Protestant newspapers in particular have been not only scarcely consulted,²⁶ but also rather poorly archived.²⁷ In 2007, the historian George Harinck could therefore still characterise them as "obscure."²⁸ Anyone interested in studying their content is thus confronted

24 The concept was coined in: R.F. Benedict, *Patterns of Culture* (Boston and New York 1934). Unlike liberal Protestantism, neo-Calvinism has been studied in terms of a 'cultural pattern'. See: J. van Putten, *Zoveel kerken, zoveel zinnen. Een sociaalwetenschappelijke studie van verschillen in behoudendheid tussen gereformeerden en christelijke gereformeerden* (Kampen 1968), 169, 176, 210, 229; Kuiper (De Bruijn, De Bruijn and Schutte eds.), *Tussen observatie en participatie*, passim.

25 Hemels, 'De pers als "een der groote machten"', 53–54.

26 Liberal Protestant periodicals are taken as objects of study in only a handful of publications: E.B. Veldkamp, *Geest en vrijheid. Schetsen na 86 jaar "Kerk & Wereld"* (Maarssen 1995); D. Jansen, "'Teekenen des Tijds. Tweemaandelijksch tijdschrift in vrijzinnig godsdienstigen geest'" (1899–1919); *Documentatieblad voor de Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis na 1800* xx.51 (December 1999), 3–22; C.M. van Driel, "'De Hervorming". Geschiedenis van het zwaard en zorgenkind van de Nederlandse Protestantenbond', in: A.A.I.M. Mikkers and Ch.E. Smit (eds.), *Tussen Augustinus en atheïsme. Kerkhistorische studiën 2006* (Leiden 2006), 136–152; J.A. de Waal, "'Het Kouter. Onafhankelijk tijdschrift voor religie en cultuur". Een miniatuur uit het rijke vrijzinnige leven tussen de twee wereldoorlogen', in: *Ibid.*, 153–163; J.A. de Waal, 'Vrijzinnigheid in de crisisjaren. Over de geschiedenis en inhoud van "Het Kouter", 1936–1941', *Documentatieblad voor de Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis na 1800* xxx.67 (December 2007), 2–39; T.E.M. Krijger, 'Een vrijzinnige "meneer". "De Hervorming" als toonaangevend en representatief persorgaan van de modern-godsdienstige richting in Nederland (1873–1934)', *Tijdschrift voor Tijdschriftstudies* xxxiii (2013), 37–58.

27 There is, for instance, no liberal Protestant equivalent to Catholic and (orthodox) Protestant documentation centres located in Nijmegen and Amsterdam respectively.

28 G. Harinck, 'Recensies – "Dienaar van twee heren"', *BMGN CXXII.4* (2007), 1–3, here 1.

with a severe heuristic challenge. Although being the leading, and for long the only, liberal Protestant opinion magazine that was issued in the Netherlands on a weekly basis, even *De Hervorming* cannot be read integrally at one location. Editorial archives of *De Hervorming* have not survived at all. Yet this is no matter for concern, as, stemming from my focus on *public* discussions in modernist circles, my primary goal was to analyse the articles published in the magazine. Moreover, the most significant editorial choices were accounted for either in the magazine itself or at annual NPB assemblies. Fortunately, I have managed to trace every single issue of *De Hervorming* and its supplement editions. Of its predecessor, the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad*, I have been able to collect 142 of the first 144 issues, covering the period between 28 January 1869 and 26 October 1871,²⁹ as well as several later issues. By visiting all the institutions in which volumes, or sometimes just one spare copy, of these magazines are preserved, I could construct a database (for personal use) with photographs of all of the more than 20,000 densely printed pages of which these issues consist. This database is supplemented with (incomplete) volumes of other liberal Protestant magazines that are neither centrally filed nor digitalised, such as *De Protestant*, *De Stroom* and *Onze Wachter*, and various brochures.³⁰

The year 1870 is also taken as our starting point, because it is generally acknowledged in historiography that the modernisation of the Netherlands started at around this year.³¹ Although ‘modernisation’ is a rather problematic concept, being associated with an eschatological and Occident-centred interpretation of history, and closely linked to secularisation theories that proclaim the inevitable marginalisation of religious beliefs in the age to come, I

29 The only two issues missing are those of 11 and 18 August 1870.

30 In order to construct this database, the following libraries and archives have been consulted: the Andover Harvard Theological Library at Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts; the National Archives and Royal Library/KB of the Netherlands in The Hague; the Utrecht Archives; the Historical Documentation Centre for Dutch Protestantism (1800 to the present day)/HDC in Amsterdam; the International Institute of Social History/IISG and Press Museum in Amsterdam; the Documentation Centre for Dutch Political Parties/DNPP in Groningen; *Tresoar* in Leeuwarden; the *Stadsarchief en Athe-naeumbibliotheek* in Deventer; the special collections of the university libraries of Amsterdam, Groningen, Leiden, and Utrecht; the (private) archive of *Vrijzinnigen Nederland* (the former *Protestantenbond*) in Zwolle and Amersfoort; and several (digital) databases mentioned in the bibliography.

31 E.g.: T. van Tijn, ‘Op de drempel van een nieuwe tijd. Nederland omstreeks 1870’, in: J.A. Van Houtte et al. (eds.), *Algemene geschiedenis der Nederlanden x. Liberaal getij, 1840-1885* (Utrecht and Antwerp 1955), 288-313; J.C.H. Blom, ‘Nederland sinds 1830’, in: J.C.H. Blom and E. Lamberts (eds.), *Geschiedenis van de Nederlanden* (Rijswijk 1993), 308-366, here 321; P. de Rooy, ‘“Dat de evenaar noch naar links, noch naar rechts doorzwikke”. De confessionelen en de moderne natie’, in: K.U. Becker (eds.), *Maatschappij en Nederlandse politiek: historisch en vergelijkend* (Amsterdam 1998), 181-203, here 200.

nonetheless follow the German theologian F.W. Graf in his suggestion to conceptualise 'modernisation' in terms of five structural processes. As Graf himself has shown in reference to Roman Catholicism, these processes provide an excellent contextual frame against the background of which the evolution of church and theology in the last two centuries can be interpreted.

A first process that Graf discerns is capitalist industrialisation, leading to social friction and socio-economic class differences. Structural changes in the field of politics, including the transition from an estate- to a class-based society, gradual democratisation, and the development of a parliamentary system based on popular sovereignty and party formation, account for a second modernisation process. While Graf does not use this term himself, 'structural differentiation' is a third process that he describes: the division into numerous autonomous segments, and the diversification, of social life due to, among other things, a growing separation between public and private spheres. The development of all kinds of new, individualistic life styles constitutes a fourth modernisation process. A final process that Graf mentions is the 'privatisation' of religion, meaning that churches lose their spiritual monopoly, and the religious landscape comes to offer people a plurality of 'options' from which they can freely choose to make sense of their own lives.³² Having the harmonisation of Christianity and modern culture as its *raison d'être*, the modernist movement had to deal with, and influence, neutralise or embrace the effects of, these processes. In our case, there is thus all the more reason to take 'modernisation' as defined by Graf as a general heuristic frame of reference for reading the volumes of liberal Protestant magazines.

This study ends at around 1940, because the Second World War constitutes a 'natural' caesura. During the war, religious life could not function as it had beforehand, as the German National Socialist regime installed in the Netherlands imposed several restrictions upon church denominations and religious associations, including the NPB.³³ At the same time, an interfactional rapprochement was set in motion within the Dutch Reformed Church that changed the

32 F.W. Graf, 'Moderne Modernisierer, modernitätskritische Traditionalisten oder reaktionäre Modernisten? Kritische Erwägungen zu Deutungsmustern der Modernismusforschung', in: H. Wolf (ed.), *Antimodernismus und Modernismus in der katholischen Kirche. Beiträge zum theologiegeschichtlichen Vorfeld des II. Vatikanums* (Paderborn etc. 1998), 67-106, here 81. See also: R. Bendel, 'Vertriebenenseelsorge. Problemanzeigen auf dem Hintergrund der aktuellen Forschungslage', in: R. Bendel and S.M. Janker (eds.), *Vertriebene Katholiken. Impulse für Umbrüche in Kirche und Gesellschaft?* (Münster 2005), 27-36, here 32.

33 G.J. Hoenderdaal, 'Het vrijzinnig protestantisme tussen de schaduwen van gisteren en morgen', in: B. Klein Wassink and Th.M. van Leeuwen (eds.), *Tussen geest en tijdgeest. Denken en doen van vrijzinnig protestanten in de afgelopen honderd jaar* (Utrecht 1989), 161-297, here 235-240.

situation of the bulk of Dutch liberal Protestants after the war.³⁴ Due to the new Dutch Reformed church order that sealed this process in 1951, Reformed liberals no longer had to 'fight' for being heard and respected; they were recognised as a separate inner-church 'modality' and as such as an interlocutor with which church officials had to reckon. With the exception of a tiny minority,³⁵ Reformed liberals contented themselves with this new situation, being willing to give in to some orthodox sensitivities (such as a reference to historical Calvinist creeds in church regulations). As a result, together with the growing popularity of the dialectical theology of Karl Barth (1886-1968),³⁶ it became rather blurry where Reformed liberalism ended and Reformed orthodoxy began, giving rise to a new, dominant current in between the two that somewhat misleadingly got the name '*middenorthodoxie*'.

3 Historiography

Liberal Protestantism in the Netherlands has received only limited attention from historians, in large part due to the paradigm of so-called '*verzuiling*' or 'pillarisation' that has long predominated in Dutch historiography. According to this paradigm, an institutional segmentation along religious and ideological lines existed in Dutch society between the late nineteenth century and the 1960s, compartmentalising club, political, cultural, and educational life in *zuilen* or pillars. Commonly, four such nationwide, segregated networks of interrelated, partisanship-based organisations are identified: an orthodox Protestant, a Roman Catholic, a social democratic, and a 'neutral' or 'general' one.³⁷ Historiography on religion in the late nineteenth- and twentieth-

34 H.J. Kater, 'Inleiding', in: *De positie van de vrijzinnige hervormden in de Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk* (Assen 1955), 1-23, here 6-9; R. Klooster, *Het vrijzinnig protestantisme in Nederland* (Kampen 2006), 76-82.

35 United in the *Zwinglibond* as of 1948. See: R.M. Nepveu, *50 jaar Zwinglibond, 1948-1998* (Odoorn [1998]), 7.

36 A reception of Barth's theology among Dutch liberal Protestants is given in: H.J. Adriaanse, 'De invloed van Karl Barth op het theologiseren in remonstrantse kring', in: S. Bouman and E.J. Kuiper (eds.), *Remonstrantse toetsen. Ervaringen met de theologie, 1934-1984* (Utrecht 1984), 157-174; S. Hennecke, *Karl Barth in den Niederlanden 1. Theologische, kulturelle und politische Rezeptionen (1919-1960)* (Göttingen 2014), 63-71, 223-234.

37 Part of the pillarisation paradigm is the idea that the years between 1870 and 1970 were an exceptional period in Dutch history, when religious involvement was more intense than it had ever been before and would be thereafter. See: F.A. Groot, 'Gewapende vrede. Ontwikkelingen op levensbeschouwelijk gebied', in: Th.A.H. de Nijs and E. Beukers (eds.), *Geschiedenis van Holland IIIb. 1795 tot 2000* (Hilversum 2003), 485-546, here 497-498.

century Netherlands has disproportionately concerned itself with the neo-Calvinists grouped together in the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (*Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland*), which were arguably the mainstay of the orthodox Protestant pillar, and Roman Catholics, for these groups were not only most clearly visible, and present, as communities with a strong group identity among the Dutch, but also most eager to document, and legitimise their position in society by writing on, their own history. Liberal Protestants, on the other hand, both fit in badly into the pillarisation paradigm (as we shall see in chapter 9 in particular), and, stemming from the future-oriented 'second Reformation' narrative that justified the rise of the modernist movement, lack the historical self-consciousness that is so characteristic of their orthodox counterparts.³⁸

The first to systematically and exhaustively deal with Dutch modernist history was the liberal Reformed minister J. Herderscheê (1850-1929).³⁹ In a 388-page book, published in 1904, he related that the formative phase of the modernist movement had been a "relatively short period of warm cheerfulness and lively interest among the general public," followed by "dampening and weakening [enthusiasm] as an obvious reaction to the unrealistic [modernist] expectation that the age of salvation for religion, church, and society had dawned," and, on the rebound, "disappointment and disenchantment" among modernists themselves. To him, it was perfectly understandable that "the hoped-for reformation" had not yet come about: before something new could be built, modernists had to fully strip church and theology of everything rooted in supernaturalism, which was a long-winded process.⁴⁰ By stressing the necessity of such "demolition work," Herderscheê, who did not doubt that the modernist movement had a bright future ahead of it,⁴¹ implicitly denounced tendencies to question first-generation modernists' achievements

38 Still in 1995, the theologian K.M. Witteveen argued that Dutch liberal Protestants tended to show less interest in the history of their religious ancestry than those with neo-Calvinist or Roman Catholic roots. See: K.M. Witteveen, *Modern geloven. Een korte schets van de geschiedenis van de vvH* (Maarsse 1995), 7.

39 The liberal Reformed minister B.W. Colenbrander had already sketched the history of the modernist movement several years before, yet only as part of a general history of Christianity as such. See: B.W. Colenbrander, *Beknopte geschiedenis van het Christendom II* (Zutphen 1894), 251-320.

40 J. Herderscheê, *De modern-godsdienstige richting in Nederland* (Amsterdam 1904), 119-121, 334-335.

41 *Ibid.*, 334, 386-388. The liberal Reformed theologian T. Cannegieter (1847-1929) ended his 1908 brochure on the theological foundations of the modernist movement by stating that the future belonged to modernism. See: T. Cannegieter, *De moderne richting* (Baarn 1908), 48.

and intentions among the new generation of modernists that began to manifest itself at around 1900.⁴²

One of these new-generation modernists, the Remonstrant theologian K.H. Roessingh (1886-1925), reversed Herderscheê's argument: the tenacity with which first-generation modernists had manifested themselves as 'iconoclasts' in church and theology was not a necessary prelude to a future in which liberal Protestantism would become mainstream, but had rather caused the modernist movement to go downhill ever since the 1870s. In 1922, he argued that modernists' 'negative theology', a rather one-sided endeavour to debunk other theological views, had led to not only the refutation of orthodox tenets, but ultimately also the inability to expand the "old unitary [modernist] theology" of which J.H. Scholten (1811-1885) and C.W. Opzoomer (1821-1892) had laid the foundations in the 1840s and 1850s (dealt with in chapter 1).⁴³ As a result, modernists generally had "vaguely defined religious views," for which they were, moreover, "hardly inclined to sheath their swords."⁴⁴ These views, Roessingh continued, did not appeal to "the common man," and had bred religious indifference among "the cultured."⁴⁵ Together with a general lack of zeal to defend these views, stemming from first-generation modernists' destructive criticism of existing church life, this lack of appeal had seriously weakened modernists' position of power in the ecclesial sphere, particularly in the Dutch Reformed Church.⁴⁶ Finally, modernists were "severely hindered" in making headway, because they had failed to organise joint congregational activities across denominational lines.⁴⁷ In 1923, Roessingh made clear that he was not entirely pessimistic about liberal Protestants' prospects, but he did reemphasise that the 'demolition work' of which Herderscheê had sung the praises had caused the modernist movement to fall behind Protestant orthodoxy in church and social life.⁴⁸

42 As such, he responded to the appeal that some modernists had already made in the late nineteenth century. See: [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Knappert's lezingen', *De Hervorming* 1896-06 (8 February 1896), 22-23, here 23; N.J. Beversen, 'Onze leestafel – "Levensbericht van Isaac Hooykaas"', *Ibid.* 1896-06 (8 February 1896), 23-24.

43 K.H. Roessingh, *Het modernisme in Nederland* (Haarlem 1922), 149-161.

44 *Ibid.*, 229.

45 *Ibid.*, 171-172.

46 *Ibid.*, 161-171.

47 *Ibid.*, 244.

48 K.H. Roessingh, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Eenheid en organisatie van het vrijzinnig protestantisme', *De Hervorming* 1923-18 (5 May 1923), 138-141; 1923-19 (12 May 1923), 146-147; 1923-20 (19 May 1923), 154-156; K.H. Roessingh, 'Rede voor de Vergadering van Moderne Theologen', in: K.H. Roessingh (G.J. Heering ed.), *Verzamelde werken* 11 (Arnhem 1926), 437-449.

In the third volume of his history of liberal Protestantism, published in 1935, the liberal Reformed theologian J. Lindeboom (1882-1958) endorsed Roessingh's analysis. The anti-ecclesial spirit that he observed among them had caused first-generation modernists not to organise a strong counterattack on orthodox attempts to seize power in the Dutch Reformed Church, thereby manoeuvring themselves, and their spiritual descendants, into a rather peripheral position in church life.⁴⁹ The sociologist J.P. Kruijt (1898-1975), who would later become a Dutch Reformed liberal himself, assumed in his 1933 dissertation on nondenominationalism in the Netherlands that the loss of influence and strength of the modernist movement was not only due to a lack of organisation. He suspected that first-generation modernists' persistent criticism of church and theology might have been perceived as an incentive to leave instead of a help to reform church life. Moreover, their strong denunciation of social evils might have stimulated people to join the labour movement, the earliest leaders of which, as shown in chapter 7, called on the working classes to abandon the churches. Kruijt was thus inclined to believe that there was a correlation between the rise of the modernist movement and the growing number of people without church membership.⁵⁰ Thirty-three years later, the liberal Reformed minister L.J. van der Kam (1908-1997) even boldly claimed that the earliest modernists had "preached the churches empty,"⁵¹ alienating both lower-class people, due to the "confusion" that their vague, sometimes contradictory religious views caused in many a congregation, and intellectuals, due to the "overstated negativism" with which they approached church and Scripture.⁵²

As of the end of the twentieth century, the amount of publications dealing with the history of Dutch liberal Protestantism has increased. Centenaries of local NPB branches, most of which were founded in the decades surrounding the year 1900, have inspired (amateur) historians to chronicle

49 J. Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III. *Sedert 1870* (Assen 1935), 41-56.

50 J.P. Kruijt, *De onkerkelijkheid in Nederland. Haar verbreiding en oorzaken: proeve eener sociografische verkenning* (Groningen and Batavia [1933]), 180, 247-249, 326. The liberal Reformed theologian M.C. van Mourik Broekman acknowledged this in: M.C. van Mourik Broekman, *Vrijzinnig protestantisme* (Huis ter Heide 1929), 37; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, 'Gesteldheden en verwachtingen betreffende het vrijzinnig protestantisme', *De Smidse* VIII.7/8 (July/August 1933), 193-205, here 203.

51 'Ds. Van der Kam: modernisme heeft kerken leeg gepreekt', *Leeuwarder Courant* CCXV.212 (10 September 1966), 22.

52 L.J. van der Kam, *Modernisme: bloei en verval . . . en verder* ([Blija 1966]), 11, 22.

the genesis and subsequent development of these branches in commemorative booklets.⁵³ In addition, at around the same time, Dutch modernist history started to attract more (academic) interest outside of liberal Protestant circles, to which a growing number of publications on modernist ministers bear witness.⁵⁴ Probably the most important reason for this is that the pillarisation paradigm has come to be nuanced (briefly referred to in chapter 9), drawing historians' attention more closely to social life 'behind' the four large pillars mentioned above. Recently, several (albeit only a few) theologians and historians have again raised the question of why the quick rise of the modernist movement in the 1860s was followed by a gradual downfall afterwards.

In a 1986 lecture, the theologian R.M. Nepveu advanced the thesis that modernism should be seen as a "radicalisation" of the process of "secularisation," being the "emancipation" of individuals from the coercive authority of the church, creeds, and Scripture in religious matters. He hence argued that modernism has fostered individual autonomy and moral self-determination, due to which the modernist movement has contributed to the rise of the number of both *randkerkelijken* (non-practising or non-churchgoing church members) and *onkerkelijken* (the unchurched), and had difficulty to spread among the lower classes.⁵⁵ Already in 1915, the liberal Reformed theologian M.C. van Mourik Broekman (1878-1945) had stated "that the modernist preaching of the faith has less success than the orthodox one" due to the former's "underlying principle of individualism." Accordingly, while orthodoxy satisfied the many who were neither capable nor willing to acquire truly personal religious convictions, liberal Protestantism only appealed to the few whose personality was strong enough to develop their own religious views, and did not foster "a strong

53 These booklets are listed separately in the bibliography. In addition, local NPB branches are studied as networks in municipal life in: E.H. Cossee, 'De Protestantenbond op Tholen. Zijn ontstaan en zijn eerste ontwikkeling', in: A. Wiggers et al. (eds.), *Rond de kerk in Zeeland* (Delft 1991), 271-280; D.J. Wolfram, *Bezwaarden en verlichten. Verzuiling in een Gelderse provincie stad, Harderwijk 1850-1925* (Amsterdam 1993), 126-128, 137-138, 207; J. van Miert, *Wars van clubgeest en partijzucht. Liberalen, natie en verzuiling, Tiel en Winschoten, 1850-1920* (Amsterdam 1994), 40, 50, 147; C.M. Jonker, *Macht en armoede aan de rivier. Ameide en Tienhoven 1870-1940* ([Ameide] 2010), 61-64, 212-215; J.M. Houkes, 'Vrijzinnige netwerken in Groningen (1867-1900)', in: Van Driel and Houkes (eds.), *Het vrijzinnige web*, 67-90.

54 These publications are listed separately in the bibliography.

55 R.M. Nepveu, *De opkomst van het modernisme in Nederland als voorbeeld van de radicalisering van een emancipatieproces* (s.l. [1987]), 9-12. See also: R.M. Nepveu, 'Modernisme vroeger en nu', *Civis Mundi* xxvii.2 (1988), 48-52, here 49.

communal spirit.” Hence, liberal Protestantism was intrinsically unable to become “a mass phenomenon.”⁵⁶

As the theologians B. Klein Wassink and Th.M. van Leeuwen highlighted in 1988, there is a tension between fostering an individual-centred religious life and joining forces. Liberal Protestants had, therefore, difficulties to create, and sustain, an institutionalised form of close cooperation that could compensate for their denominational disunity – which Klein Wassink and Van Leeuwen, by the way, did not assess negatively: if liberal Protestants were to be united into one church denomination (in favour of which pleas had been made throughout modernist history), they would easily be driven into seclusion and deprived of any opportunity to exert influence outside their own circles.⁵⁷ The historian of Christianity A.L. Molendijk argued in 1996 that the majority of first-generation modernists cherished the ideal of a ‘big tent church’ or *volkskerk*, broad enough to accommodate the entire Dutch nation and intended to “educate the masses in a liberal sense,” in order to avert this danger. Because they, together with political liberals, “thought to represent the common good and tried to integrate the existing [religious and social] multiformity into an overarching whole,” liberal Protestants were hesitant to get organised. The political divergence that occurred among them in the early twentieth century, causing the liberal majority to be flanked by a social democratic minority, only complicated this further. As a result, modernists and political liberals lost the “leading position” that they had had in Dutch society in the third quarter of the nineteenth century to groups that opposed their dominance (most notably neo-Calvinists and Roman Catholics) by establishing separate ‘pillars’.⁵⁸

Molendijk remarks that liberal Protestants “represented the ideals of a characteristically bourgeois class.”⁵⁹ Already in 1988, the theologian C.W. Mönnich had characterised modernism as “bourgeois throughout [. . .], appealing to a certain spiritual elite that belonged to the well-to-do and well-bred bourgeoisie, yet lacking appeal [to upper and lower classes].”⁶⁰ Modernist theology was, to quote the sociologist of religion D.J. Bos, therefore “geared toward

56 M.C. van Mourik Broekman, *De orthodoxe en moderne geloofsprediking uit psychologisch oogpunt vergeleken* (Zaltbommel 1915), 25, 43, 34, 28.

57 B. Klein Wassink and Th.M. van Leeuwen, ‘Een blik op de toekomst. Vrijzinnig protestantisme, waarheen?’, in: Klein Wassink and Van Leeuwen (eds.), *Tussen geest en tijdgeest*, 509–525, here 518–525.

58 A.L. Molendijk, ‘De vervluchtiging van het vrijzinnig protestantisme in Nederland’, *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift* L (1996), 122–134, here 127–131.

59 *Ibid.*, 128.

60 C.W. Mönnich, ‘De ontwikkeling van de vrijzinnigheid in Nederland van de negentiende eeuw af’, in: Klein Wassink and Van Leeuwen (eds.), *Tussen geest en tijdgeest*, 7–160, here 41.

the middle class,”⁶¹ or even, in the words of the theologian M.F. Buitenwerf-van der Molen, “chiefly geared to the experiential universe of the elite,” as its cerebral nature “caused problems in answering the existential questions of the non-theologically trained faithful.”⁶² Buitenwerf-van der Molen’s conclusion corresponds to an observation that M.C. van Mourik Broekman had made in 1925, namely that first-generation modernists’ theological views were generally perceived as “intellectualistic” and “rationalistic,” even among later-generation modernists.⁶³

4 A New Perspective

In sum, the development of Dutch liberal Protestantism is sketched as a bourgeois story with an early plot twist: showing great promise in its formative phase, the modernist movement lost ground quickly afterwards. As Roessingh, Van Mourik Broekman, Lindeboom, and others have concluded, the modernist movement utterly failed to live up to its earliest adherents’ expectation that it would succeed in reshaping, or even replacing, church life, and permeating social life with the true (liberal-minded) spirit of Jesus.⁶⁴ Of course, it is easy to give a reason for this by simply dismissing the pursuit of a ‘second Reformation’ as unrealistic and far too ambitious. However, the achievements of the modernist movement were not merely few in comparison with first-generation modernists’ high hopes; liberal Protestants even became further removed from centre stage in both church and society as time went on. The explanations for this that have been put forward in historiography can be reduced to the following three. First, modernists’ religious views have been perceived as too vague, confusing, too destructive, and even as an incentive to abandon church life altogether. Second, the modernist movement lacked inner unity, as its adherents were scattered over several denominations, had diverse theological beliefs, and came to have opposing political views in the early twentieth century. Third, the modernist movement was considerably less well organised than other groups in church and society, particularly those that

61 D.J. Bos, *Servants of the Kingdom. Professionalization among Ministers of the Nineteenth-Century Netherlands Reformed Church* (Leiden 2010), 390.

62 Buitenwerf-van der Molen, *God van vooruitgang*, 197–198. Hers is one of several doctoral theses on liberal Protestantism published from the year 2000 onwards, which are listed separately in the bibliography.

63 M.C. van Mourik Broekman, *Vrijzinnig christelijk geloofsleven* (Leiden [1925]), 101.

64 Roessingh, *Het modernisme in Nederland*, 145; Van Mourik Broekman, *Vrijzinnig christelijk geloofsleven*, 102; Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* 111, 28–29.

constituted their own 'pillars'. These explanations suggest that the modernist movement might have been more successful in realising church reforms and making progress in social life if certain external conditions had been met, that is, if it had been less theologically inconsistent in outsiders' perception, less 'divided against itself', and better organised. But is this true?

The thesis advanced in this book is that this question should be answered in the negative. Although the decline in influence and appeal of the modernist movement has undoubtedly been aggravated by the three reasons mentioned above, its causes were much more fundamental, even inherent to the modernist movement itself. First, the ecclesial and social reform-mindedness in liberal Protestant circles was actually not as big as might be expected on the basis of the ambitions and pretensions with which the modernist movement heralded itself. Second, it was due to a specific discourse that the modernist movement did not manage to broaden its base outside bourgeois circles.⁶⁵

As it plays such a central role in the argumentation of this study yet not always has similar connotations in different contexts, the adjective 'bourgeois' needs to be carefully defined.⁶⁶ In this study, it is used in both a cultural and a social sense. First, 'bourgeois' is used as a synonym for the Dutch adjective *burgerlijk*, even though the conceptual histories of the two terms slightly differ.⁶⁷ As such, it refers to a specific cultural pattern that emerged in the Netherlands (and elsewhere in Europe) in the middle of the nineteenth century and was characterised by the endeavour to advance self-development and self-help, the ideal of character building as the ultimate aim of education, a 'civilising offensive' with which respectability and sociability were to be advanced, an emphasis on law-abidingness and civic duties, the ideal of national unity, and a commitment to parliamentarianism and a capitalist economic order.⁶⁸ As

65 I have introduced this argument in: Krijger, 'Een vrijzinnige "meneer"', 54-57. A summary of my argument is given in: T.E.M. Krijger, 'Standing on Luther's Shoulders. The Concept of the Reformation in Pre-World War II Dutch Liberal Protestantism' [forthcoming].

66 A conceptual history of the term 'bourgeois' is given in, e.g.: B. Le Wita, *French Bourgeois Culture* (Cambridge 1994), 23-61; P.M. Pilbeam, 'Bourgeois Society', in: S. Berger (ed.), *A Companion to Nineteenth-Century Europe, 1789-1914* (Malden etc. 2006), 86-97; F. Moretti, *The Bourgeois. Between History and Literature* (London and Brooklyn 2013), 1-24.

67 H. te Velde, 'How High Did the Dutch Fly? Remarks on Stereotypes of Burger Mentality', in: J.B.E. Galema et al. (eds.), *Images of the Nation. Different Meanings of Dutchness, 1870-1940* (Amsterdam 1993), 59-79; W.R.E. Velema, 'Beschaafde republikeinen. Burgers in de achttiende eeuw', in: R.A.M. Aerts and H. te Velde (eds.), *De stijl van de burger. Over Nederlandse burgerlijke cultuur vanaf de middeleeuwen* (Kampen 1998), 80-99.

68 P.B.M. Blaas, *De burgerlijke eeuw. Over eeuwwenden, liberale burgerij en geschiedschrijving* (Hilversum 2000), 94-112; J.Th.M. Bank and M.B. van Buuren, *Dutch Culture in a European Perspective III. 1900: The Age of Bourgeois Culture* (Assen etc. 2004).

set forth in chapters 1 and 9, this cultural pattern is labelled not only 'bourgeois', but also 'liberal', and was closely, albeit not exclusively, linked to political liberalism. Second, 'bourgeois' refers in this study also to what is called '*burgerij*' in Dutch, encompassing those who derive their social status from their self-amassed riches, level of education, and profession rather than their birth. After the old upper class of those who did take their standing from their lineage (the aristocracy) lost its legal privileges in 1848,⁶⁹ those who set the trends in literature and culture, exercised the most political power, filled positions in academic life, and were well off came to constitute a new, merit-based elite in Dutch society.⁷⁰ As shown in the abovementioned studies of Herderscheê, Roessingh, and others, the modernist movement initially kindled interest among this social vanguard. However, this interest quickly dwindled, causing the modernist movement to rely on middle-class support. In this study, middle-class people are defined as people who belonged to neither the elite, nor the manual labour force (the working classes), while the term 'bourgeois' is used in reference *only* to those middle-class people who identified with the *burgerlijke* or liberal cultural pattern outlined above. To phrase it differently, 'bourgeois' refers to those to whom this adjective applies in both its social *and* cultural sense.⁷¹

5 Synopsis

This book is divided into five thematic parts. The first part, 'The Dutch Modernist Movement', contextualises the genesis and the development of the community of liberal Protestants in the Netherlands. Arguing that modernism or

69 J.K.S. Moes, *Onder aristocraten. Over hegemonie, welstand en aanzien van adel, patriciaat en andere notabelen in Nederland, 1848-1914* (Hilversum 2012), 45.

70 On this intellectual elite, see: R.A.M. Aerts, 'Bevoegde autoriteiten. Burgerlijke intellectuelen in de negentiende eeuw: een groepsportret', *De Negentiende Eeuw* XXII.1 (1998), 72-95.

71 In the Dutch context, Abraham Kuyper claimed the petty bourgeoisie or lower middle class as the social stratum from which he recruited his sympathisers. He cultivated an image of neo-Calvinists as *kleine luyden* or 'little people', who did not belong to the working classes, but did not identify with liberal-bourgeois culture at the same time. See: H.H. van der Laan, 'De kleine luyden. Notities over de herkomst van een begrip', *Kerk en Theologie* XXXIII (1982), 41-47; J.P.M. Koch, *Abraham Kuyper. Een biografie* (Amsterdam 2006), 310-323; P.J. Dijkman, 'Kleine luyden', in: Harinck, Paul and Wallet (eds.), *Het gereformeerde geheugen*, 153-162; G.J. Schutte, 'De kleine luyden', in: W. Bouwman et al. (eds.), *Geschiedenis van het christendom in Nederland* (Zwolle and Utrecht 2010), 188-217, here 191; H. te Velde, *Van regentenmentaliteit tot populisme. Politieke tradities in Nederland* (Amsterdam 2010), 251-254; A. van Helden, 'De "kleine luyden" van Abraham Kuyper. Een vorm van populistische retoriek?', *De Negentiende Eeuw* XXXV.3 (2011), 139-145.

liberal Protestantism can best be defined in terms of general 'features' that its adherents had in common, chapter 1 seeks a common ground in first-generation modernists' ideas on God, Jesus, the Bible, mankind, epistemology, Christianity, and other religions. It further traces the roots of modernist theology and the development of the modernist movement in its formative phase, which more or less ended with the founding of the NPB in 1870. The subsequent history of Dutch liberal Protestantism until 1940 is sketched in chapter 2 through the perspective of *De Hervorming*, highlighting the point that changes in the editorial format and content of this magazine epitomise modernist preoccupations and self-reflections in church and society in general. Connected therewith, this chapter elucidates how *De Hervorming* functioned both as the building block and pillar of the imagined community that was the NPB, and as the centre of the discourse community that was the modernist movement.

The second part, 'Modernising Christianity', studies modernists' position in church and religious life against the background of the endeavour to reshape Christianity in interaction with modernisation processes (in particular the diversification of life styles and the privatisation of religion). Chapter 3 deals with the development of modernists' identity vis-à-vis orthodoxy, explaining the problematic nature of modernist self-perceptions and the implications of the gradual replacement of the self-label 'modern' by 'vrijzinnig'. This replacement exemplifies a transition that had occurred in modernist public opinion regarding the issue of church reform, for which chapter 4 provides an explanation. As chapter 5 makes clear, this change in outlook had, in turn, repercussions on modernists' relation to others who were not satisfied with orthodoxy either, such as the adherents of so-called 'little religions', Roman Catholic and neo-Calvinist dissidents, people abandoning church life altogether, and atheists.

The third part, 'Liberal Protestant Discourse', coincides with chapter 6, showing that a dominant discourse was used in modernist discussions on church and social reform, and stressing both the theoretical foundations and the practical implications that this discourse had.

The fourth part, 'Christianising Modern Society', focuses on modernists' position in social, cultural, and political life against the background of the endeavour to bring the effects of modernisation processes (in particular capitalist industrialisation, the emergence of a class society and a democratic political system, and structural differentiation) into line with liberal religious principles. That modernist discourse actually thwarted this endeavour is demonstrated in relation to the lower classes in general and the labour movement in particular in chapter 7, and so-called 'intellectuals' in chapter 8. The growing

awareness in modernist circles that liberal political parties and associations based on the principle of religious 'neutrality' thwarted this endeavour as well, causing modernists to reconsider their position in social life in the early twentieth century, is interpreted in chapter 9.

The fifth (and final) part, 'The International Context', explores the foreign context of Dutch modernist history. Taking into account that the Netherlands was a colonial power, chapter 10 shows that while liberal Protestants tried to increase their influence in the Dutch East Indies in the early twentieth century, due to a general feeling of marginalisation expounded upon in the previous chapter, their involvement with missionary activities in the Dutch East Indies remained low, as most of them felt that modernist discourse should not result in missionary activities among the indigenous peoples of Indonesia. Elsewhere in Asia, there were missionary projects based on liberal religious principles, conducted by, most notably, German liberal Protestants and American Unitarians. Chapter 11 compares the history of these and other foreign groups of liberal Protestants to that of the Dutch modernist movement, thereby further substantiating claims made in reference to the latter.

The various thematic lines that are stretched in each of these chapters are tied together in a concluding chapter. As argued there, Dutch modernist history poses a major paradox stemming from the very nature of the modernist movement itself.

PART 1

The Dutch Modernist Movement



The Genesis of the Modernist Movement

1 “The First Characterisation of Modernism”¹

“I, for one, shall rely on the form of authority, which the Protestant Church – with the exception of the modern theologians – has always recognised and respected – and for good reasons.”² In 1858, these words were uttered in an anonymously published brochure that led to some turmoil in the Dutch theological and ecclesial domain.³ The author of the booklet, quickly identified as D.Th. Huet (1790-1874), then a minister in the Dutch Reformed congregation in Rotterdam, had felt the urge to reach for his pen to warn Protestants all across the Netherlands against the emergence of a new theological current.⁴ Huet was probably the first to designate this current with the adjective ‘modern’ or ‘modernist’.⁵

In his brochure, the moderately orthodox Huet gave his readers seven *wenken* (warnings), in which he characterised the theology that he branded as ‘modernist’, and set this characterisation against what he saw as ‘true’ Protestantism. First, he juxtaposed modernists’ glorification of individual autonomy in doctrinal matters with the ‘time-honoured’ notion of authority. Arguing that

1 Called as such in: I.M.J. Hoog, ‘Uit het kerkelijk leven voor 60 jaar’, *Theologisch Tijdschrift* XLIII (1909), 113-137, here 113.

2 [D.Th. Huet], *Wenken opzigtelijk moderne theologie* (The Hague 1858), 15.

3 A critical review was published in: D. Harting, ‘Boekbeoordelingen en verslagen’, *Nieuwe Jaarboeken voor Wetenschappelijke Theologie* 1 (1858), 405-412. The brochure received critical acclaim in: ‘Boekaankondiging’, *Ernst en Vrede* VI (1858), 292. A counterattack against Huet was made in: *Brief aan een vriend naar aanleiding van de “Wenken opzigtelijk moderne theologie”* (Kampen 1859). The controversy following the publication of the brochure was mocked in: ‘Kerknieuws’, *De Nederlandsche Spectator* 1859-03 (16 January 1859), 11-12; 1859-21 (22 May 1859), 84.

4 E.J.W. Koch, ‘Berigten’, *Godgeleerde Bijdragen* XXXIII.1 (1858), 517-522; J.T. Bergman, ‘Levensschets van Daniel Théodore Huet’, in: *Handelingen en mededeelingen van de Maatschappij der Nederlandsche Letterkunde te Leiden, over het jaar 1873-1874* II. *Levensberichten* (Leiden 1874), 113-132, here 125, note 1.

5 Herderscheê, *De modern-godsdienstige richting in Nederland*, 124-125, 206-207; M.A.P., ‘Ingezonden stukken – “Moderne richting”, “moderne theologie”’, *De Hervorming* 1908-42 (17 October 1908), 335; C.G. Chavannes, ‘Óf – óf’, *Ibid.* 1909-01 (2 January 1909), 3-4, here 4; A.M. Brouwer, *De moderne richting. Eene historisch-dogmatische studie* (Nijmegen [1912]), 7-9; Buitenwerf-van der Molen, *God van vooruitgang*, 14.

most laymen lacked “the necessary knowledge, the strength of mind, the intellectual development, the love for study, the correct knowledge of man’s ethical needs, the time and the resources to absorb the Evangelical truth independently,” and fearing that laymen would fall into idle unbelief if they were to be involved in exegetical issues, Huet chided modernists for claiming that faith ought not to be based on authority *a priori* attributed to the Bible. However, the basic thought of Protestantism, Huet argued, is that the authority of the Bible is indeed given, because it is the Word of God. Ministers assist the faithful in reading the Bible and explain to them the doctrinal framework through which the Bible should be interpreted. Just as an ill person should not try to cure himself, but needs to consult a general practitioner, a churchgoer should not arrogate the role of exegete to himself and respect the authority of his minister in doctrinal matters.⁶

Second, Huet reasoned that, as the rapid developments within academia (of which modern theology itself was a result) proved, scholarly knowledge was anything but fixed. Was there any certainty that statements modern theologians made would still be valid in ten or even five years? Modern theology, Huet implied, was too dependent on scientific and scholarly insights to explain the Bible in a way that strengthened people’s faith. Third, Huet considered modernists’ repudiation of miracles, as supernatural interventions of God in everyday reality, to be an expression of haughtiness: God’s ability to act is not limited by man’s power of imagination. Moreover, Huet professed not to understand why modern theologians believed that God was supreme and that this supremacy had enabled him to structure nature according to some immutable laws, while they apparently also believed that God imposed the restriction upon himself never to disrespect those laws. If God were still supreme, why would it be impossible for him to surpass or bypass the laws of nature, to act *supernaturally*, whenever he wanted to?

Fourth, Huet abhorred modernists’ de-deification of the one after whom Christianity is named. It was no coincidence that he placed this abhorrence at the centre of his argument: this was the single biggest grievance he had against modernist theology. Stating that Jesus Christ was only a human being without any divine features yet a *perfect* human being – as, according to Huet, modern theologians did – was an inconsistency: ‘being human’ and ‘being perfect’ mutually exclude each other. What is more, there was no rational motivation to separate one man from the rest of mankind as being ‘more perfect’ than others. Someone could only regard Jesus as being ‘most perfect’ when he acknowledged that the Bible, or at least the Gospel, was a special kind of divine

6 This paragraph is a paraphrase of: [Huet], *Wenken opzigtelijk moderne theologie*, 1-16.

revelation. And this, Huet accentuated, was exactly what modern theologians denied. Fifth, Huet argued that ministers should not make improper use of the pulpit as a lectern from which they could spread questionable ideas. It was their sole task to strengthen the faith of their parishioners and apply Scriptural narratives to their own time. Biblical parables have high value in themselves, Huet contended, whether they are historically accurate or not.

Sixth, Huet blamed modern theologians for frenetically trying to reject all elements of Christianity that are beyond human comprehension, so that it could develop into the universal religion of mankind. Yet, without these elements, particularly without a supernatural Christ, the claim that Christianity is not just *a* religion next to others, but *the* religion in which humanity finds its true fulfilment, cannot be substantiated. After all, insofar as non-Christian religions, stripped of their supernatural aura, also contain ideas congruous with human consciousness, it could equally be claimed that humanity finds its true fulfilment in one of those religions. Finally, Huet warned that by rejecting the authority of Scripture, modern theologians prepared the triumph of Roman Catholicism over Protestantism; not only because Protestants would be unable to make a united front against Catholicism if each and every one of them had a different idea of what 'Truth' was, but also because those Protestants who were incapable of developing a personal conception of God and a personal outlook on life would be attracted by the systematic, simple, and sentimental teachings of the Roman Catholic Church.⁷

Huet's brochure was the first of many in which modernist ministers were accused of demolishing Christian faith. As was historically the case with 'Christian' and 'Protestant',⁸ the adjective 'modernist' was meant to be a pejorative term, but the theologians at whom Huet aimed his criticism immediately adopted it as an honorary title.⁹ Notwithstanding his negative assessment of modernism, Huet did correctly discern several epistemological and hermeneutical characteristics of modern theology as it emerged in the mid-nineteenth century, for which the term '*oud-modernisme*' ('old-school modernism') was coined in the early twentieth century. At around the same time, as shown in more detail in chapter 3, (elements of) old-school modernism came to be nuanced and even severely challenged in modernist circles. Taking into account that 'modernism' as such is an umbrella term that covers a wide array of views and positions, this chapter looks at modern theology in its archetypical form

7 The above three paragraphs are a paraphrase of: [Huet], *Wenken*, 17-48.

8 P. Trebilco, *The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius* (Tübingen 2004), 559; K.G. Appold, *The Reformation. A Brief History* (Malden etc. 2011), 137.

9 Brouwer, *De moderne richting*, 7-8.

and focuses on the influences that helped to bring it into being. Finally, it sketches the emergence and development of modern theology and the modernist movement up to the founding of *De Hervorming* in 1873.

2 A Characterisation of Modernism

Every answer given to the question of what ‘modernism’ or ‘liberal Protestantism’ is will be contestable, not only because it is always a simplification to speak about any group in generalisations, but also, in this particular case, because those who self-identified as ‘modernists’ had difficulty in making clear what exactly ‘modernism’ was. There were no particular beliefs or institutional affiliations someone needed to have in order to be accepted as a modernist by others who also identified as ‘modernists’. In practice, a modernist simply was everyone who self-identified as such. Other contemporary groups in Dutch Protestantism had less of an open character, making it less difficult to typify them than modernists. Neo-Calvinists, to take the example already used in the introductory chapter, did not entirely agree with each other on every theological issue – more than that, there were heated discussions among them on exegetical and doctrinal matters, ultimately leading to two schisms in the first half of the twentieth century – and did not unanimously praise Kuyper for everything he did or thought. Yet, they all adhered to the same creeds – in their case the so-called ‘Three Forms of Unity’, comprising the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dordt –, were all grouped together in the *Anti-Revolutionaire Partij* (Anti-Revolutionary Party or ARP) and, after 1892, in the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, tended to separately organise themselves and other orthodox Protestants in social life, and had, in the person of Kuyper, a figure who stood in the centre of their movement.¹⁰ A historian or theologian who wants to characterise neo-Calvinists thus has at least a few points of reference on which he can base his characterisation and on the basis of which he can portray a ‘prototypical’ neo-Calvinist. By contrast, there was no creed unanimously accepted by modernists, modernist church life extended over several church denominations, modernists were very reluctant to establish organisations of their own, and no one among modernists had a position similar to that of Kuyper in neo-Calvinist circles.

Perhaps it is best to look at modernists, metaphorically speaking, in terms of a ‘family’. Those who felt to be part of the modernist ‘family’ did not share

¹⁰ The Anti-Revolutionary Party also had support outside of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. Members of this church denomination nonetheless dominated it.

exactly similar conceptions of God, a similar political persuasion, or similar ideas about society, but they did have, on an abstract level, some features in common with which they showed themselves to be members of this family, and that distinguished them from members of other ‘families’ within Protestantism. Their beliefs, different as they were, had common roots – or, to put it more precisely, were rooted in a shared historical-critical approach to the Bible, a shared rejection of a supernaturalist interpretation of Christianity, the shared ideal of modernising Christianity and of permeating society with this modernised Christianity, and the shared ideal of a truly *personal* faith.

One of the characteristics of modernists was that their interpretation of the Bible was based on historical-critical methodology. The Bible had been studied historically-critically prior to the mid-nineteenth century, prompted by questions about the authorship of certain biblical books and the existence of inner-textual incongruities.¹¹ For example, the German philosopher H.S. Reimarus (1694-1768), famously portrayed by A. Schweitzer (1875-1965) as the ‘patriarch’ of higher criticism,¹² had already rejected the stories of the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and the resurrection of Jesus as historically accurate, but he did not impugn the traditional view that the biblical books were meant to be historical documents. To quote the theologian D.J. Hawkin, “what [Reimarus] challenged was their veracity, not their historical intent.”¹³ According to Reimarus, the content of some biblical texts was clearly distorted, but they still, in some way or another, referred to historical occurrences. In the mid-nineteenth century, however, some theologians began to question whether the Old and New Testaments should be classified within the genre of history at all.

As a book in which the religion of ancient Israel is documented, a book in which the spiritual realm of thought of Jesus’ disciples and the first congregations of his worshippers are written down, the Bible did possess authority for modernists, but not *a priori* and not because all the biblical words were supposed to be God-given in any way. On the contrary, biblical stories, modern theologians argued, are only authoritative insofar as they appeal to individual religious sentiments. A lot of texts in the Old Testament, depicting an envious, irascible, and wrathful Yahweh, and in the New Testament, dealing with

11 D.R. Law, *The Historical-Critical Method. A Guide for the Perplexed* (London and New York 2012), 25-52.

12 A. Schweitzer, *Von Reimarus zu Wrede. Eine Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung* (Tübingen 1906).

13 D.J. Hawkin, *Christ and Modernity. Christian Self-Understanding in a Technological Age* (Waterloo 1985), 31.

extrasensory miracles Jesus is said to have performed, do not and cannot fulfil this piety-inducing role, as they are, in their literal sense, illogical, irrational or even offensive.¹⁴ Being first and foremost a product of literary imagination, the Bible is not primarily intended to be a book that can sustain questions about its historicity. Rather, it should be seen as a genre in its own right, made up of a mixture of actual history, poetic licence, prophecies, fantasy, and ageless wisdom. The Bible and the Word of God, the latter meaning the self-revelation of the Supreme Being or the Highest Power in his relation to human beings, therefore do not coincide with each other. Instead, who God is, and what the purpose of human existence is, are concealed behind the verbatim biblical texts and are reflected in nature as well. Biblical narratives are no more than historically conditioned efforts to make a-historical statements about human encounters with the divine comprehensible for a particular group of people in a given context. Biblical imagery was adapted to the specific historical setting of ancient Israel and the intellectual grasp of its inhabitants. The Israelites and the people surrounding them, who were addressed in the Gospel by the Evangelists, did not have the knowledge about the natural order of things and the cultural refinement that nineteenth-century scholars had, or at least claimed to have. The conceptual universe of the former was of a 'lower order' than that of the latter.¹⁵

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- 14 Extensively dealing with miracles are: A. Pierson, *De oorsprong der moderne rigting* (Haarlem 1862); A.T. Reitsma, *Voor en tegen de moderne theologie. Beantwoording mijner tegenschrijvers en handhaving der beginselen, uitgesproken in mijne voorlezingen over de moderne theologie* (Groningen 1863); J.C. Zaalberg, *De godsdienst van Jezus en de moderne rigting. Christelijke toespraken over de godsdienstige vragen des tijds* (The Hague 1864), 189-220; J.C. Matthes, *De nieuwe richting. Een leesboek voor de gemeente van dezen tijd* (Groningen [1866] 1867); J.H. Scholten, *Supranaturalisme in verband met Bijbel, Christendom en protestantisme. Eene vraag des tijds* (Leiden 1867); B.W. Colenbrander, *Geen fabelen. Een boek voor het volk, bevattende opmerkingen over de wonderen van den Bijbel* (Harlingen 1868). See also: M.N.J. Moltzer, *Wat zegt gij van de moderne richting?* (Haarlem 1871).
- 15 E.g.: [H. Oort in:] 'Zevende Protestantendag', *De Hervorming* 1879-45 (8 November 1879), 178-179, here 179; 'Godsdienstige opvoeding', *Ibid.* 1880-35 (28 August 1880), 137-138; E. Snellen, 'Zoek het geluk niet in de verte', *Ibid.* 1881-46 (19 November 1881), 185-186; B.B., 'Blijmoedig vertrouwen', *Ibid.* 1887-33 (13 August 1887), 129-130; E. Snellen, 'De Bijbelsche wonderverhalen en het gemoedsleven onzer kinderen', *Ibid.* 1888-01 (1 January 1888), 1-2, here 2 [erroneously dated '1 January 1887']; H. de Lang, 'Het Oude Testament en de godsdienstige opvoeding onzer jeugd', *Ibid.* 1888-10 (10 March 1888), 38; 1888-11 (17 March 1888), 42; 1888-12 (24 March 1888), 46; 1888-13 (31 March 1888), 50; H. Vrendenberg Cz., 'Onze verhouding tot den Bijbel', *Ibid.* 1895-50 (14 December 1895), 197-198; A.C. Leendertz, 'Ingezonden stukken – De Bijbel', *Ibid.* 1896-05 (1 February 1896), 19-20; H. Oort, 'Eene dankbetuiging met een wensch', *Ibid.* 1901-14 (6 April 1901), 106; C.E. Hooykaas, 'Ons standpunt

Contrary to the orthodox Christian view that humans are inherently sinful because they all share in the misfortune Adam called down upon himself by disregarding God's regulations in the Garden of Eden, and consequently need to accept Christ as their Redeemer, the inner nature of man was looked upon with less abhorrence in modernism. Not all modernists were equally optimistic in this respect and some, who came to be known as *malcontenten* (malcontents) and later as *rechts-modernen* (right-wing modernists; the word 'right-wing' having no political connotation whatsoever here) in the Netherlands in the early decades of the twentieth century, even firmly upheld the dialectic relationship between the perfect God and imperfect man.¹⁶ What all modernists did have in common was that they were, to a greater or lesser extent, convinced of the ability of man to seek contact with God *on his own strength*. In orthodoxy, man was said to be unable to approach God by his own achievement or without the mediation of Jesus Christ, thereby stressing the transcendence or otherworldliness of God, but in modernism a stronger emphasis was placed on the immanent divine 'spark' glowing inside every human being. God should not be seen as an entity standing in opposition to humans and the world they live in. On the contrary, reality is not divided into an otherworldly, unobservable 'spiritual sphere' and a visible 'realm of the senses' regulated by the laws of nature, in which God can interfere. God is *in* this world and although he is more than the sum of its parts, he is not *outside* of it – modernists' adage was that the divine is *bovenzinnelijk* (supersensory), not *bovennatuurlijk* (supernatural).¹⁷ There is no 'barrier' humans need to pass over to be able to experience the presence of God in reality, but cannot do so on their own, without mediation, because of their innate unworthiness.

ten opzichte van het Oude Testament', *Ibid.* 1906-11 (17 March 1906), 81-82; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Berichten, enz. – Van de bijbelsche wonderwereld', *Ibid.* 1912-11 (16 March 1912), 83-84; H.J. Toxopeüs, 'Het praktische gebruik van het Nieuwe Testament', *Ibid.* 1912-27 (6 July 1912), 211-212; [H. de Lang], 'Redactioneel – Een Kinderbijbel', *Ibid.* 1917-21 (26 May 1917), 171-172; H. Bakels, *Wij ketters – ja, "om de eere Gods!" Opgedragen aan alle gereformeerde jongelui* (Haarlem 1920), 27-38; A.C. Schade van Westrum, *Het goed recht en de waarde van het modern-godsdienstig geloof* (Groningen 1921), 9-10.

16 C.G. Chavannes, 'Mijmeringen VIII. Onze malcontenten', *Teekenen des Tijds* VI (1904), 380-403; K.H. Roessingh, *Rechts-modernisme* (Haarlem 1918).

17 E.g.: C.W. Opzoomer, *De geest der nieuwe rigting. Redevoering, ter opening der akademische lessen* (Amsterdam 1862), 16, 27; Matthes, *De nieuwe richting*, 8; W. Muurling, *Resultaten van onderzoek en ervaring op godsdienstig gebied* II (Groningen 1867), 9; J. Knappert, 'Onderscheid tusschen modernen', *De Hervorming* 1875-22 (3 June 1875), 3; J. Knappert, 'Ingezonden stukken', *Ibid.* 1877-35 (1 September 1877), 4; W. Zaalberg, 'Onze samenkomsten', *Ibid.* 1881-35 (3 September 1881), 138; Herderscheê, *De modern-godsdienstige richting*, 282.

Modernists were convinced that man should not believe on the basis of others' testimonies of faith – those of the authors or protagonists of biblical texts, the writers of creeds, or clergymen –, but that he should be guided by his own inner voice. Man's conscience was believed to re-echo the voice of God. Modernists did acknowledge that not every individual gave proof of the same degree of intrinsic refinement, but they were optimistic about man's perfectibility and potential for ethical self-improvement nonetheless. After all, the course of history revealed a clearly discernible, evolutionary process of ever-increasing intellectual, moral, and religious progression. On the other hand, history and everyday experience continuously gave evidence of human failings as well. These should not be interpreted as consequences of inborn sinfulness, but rather as deficiencies in the inner nature of the individual concerned, as a result of his not yet fully developed spiritual potential.¹⁸

Early modernists' outlook on life sketched here is referred to as 'monism'. Put briefly, monism is based on the theorem that God is the all-pervasive energetic force that permeates the entire universe and the ultimate unity that holds together all separate components of reality – not to be confused with the 'pantheistic' idea that God and nature totally coincide, leading to a 'deification' of nature¹⁹ – and that there is, consequently, no spatial distinction between a supernatural realm and nature.²⁰ God is not seen as a *deus ex machina*, who personally crosses the border between these separate domains through supernatural acts, but is believed to make himself known *within* human beings. Man does not need the mediation of a priest, saints, the church or the words of Scripture to be able to approach and encounter God.

18 K.H. Roessingh, *De moderne theologie in Nederland. Hare voorbereiding en eerste periode* (Groningen 1914), 135-146, 163-165, 179-182.

19 Yet, there were modernists with pantheistic views, such as the ministers P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., L.A. Bähler, and J.C. Wannée (1879-1946), the teacher of religion C. Sparnaay, and the minister-lawyer F.C.M. Boenders. See: P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., *Ethisch pantheïsme* (Amsterdam 1903); L.A. Bähler, 'Ingezonden stukken', *De Hervorming* 1904-07 (13 February 1904), 54; P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., 'Ingezonden stukken – Nog eens "ethisch pantheïsme"', *Ibid.* 1907-46 (16 November 1907), 365-366; J. Allanson Picton (L.A. Bähler ed.), *Het pantheïsme, zijn geschiedenis en zijn beteekenis* ([Baarn] 1912); L.A. Bähler, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Over de onvolmaaktheid in den Volmaakte', *De Hervorming* 1918-37 (14 September 1918), 145; C. Sparnaay, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Een nabetrachting', *Ibid.* 1918-47 (23 November 1918), 185; G. Hulsman, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – "Religieuze levens- en wereldbeschouwing. Los van het Christendom"', *Ibid.* 1920-52 (31 December 1920), 206; F.C.M. Boenders, 'Vereeniging van godsdienstige vrijzinnigen', *Ibid.* 1925-07 (14 February 1925), 52.

20 Roessingh, *De moderne theologie in Nederland*, 189-190; Klooster, *Het vrijzinnig protestantisme in Nederland*, 30-31.

A close scrutiny of the Bible, based on methodological principles derived from philology, archaeology, geology, linguistics, and physics, proved that the Bible contradicted itself on numerous occasions. This had been noticed before, but contrary to their predecessors, modern theologians did not feel the need to harmonise biblical antinomies with each other. Quite the reverse; the inconsistencies and errors documented in the Bible revealed that the Old and New Testaments were products of human imagination, thereby indicating that the verbatim texts of the Bible and the actual meaning of these texts should not be confused with each other. The Gospel may give rise to the thought that Jesus regarded himself as the Messiah, but they do not contain any words that Jesus has written down himself. Some modernists therefore questioned whether this carpenter's son from Galilee considered himself to be God-turned-human at all or whether this was an image projected upon him by the Evangelists.²¹ A fraction of them, from the late 1870s onwards largely united in the so-called 'Dutch Radical School', even questioned whether Jesus the Nazarene has existed at all, and denied that the apostle Paul has written any of the letters attributed to him.²² Most modernists did accept that there had been a man named Jesus from the town of Nazareth walking around in Palestine during the governorship of Pontius Pilate. All of them rejected, in one way or another, the orthodox Christian view of the historical Jesus. In their view, the historical Jesus had undoubtedly been in close contact with God the Father, albeit not as *the* Son of God, but as *a* son of God, as one of *many* 'children' of God. Every sincere, fair-minded, God-seeking individual was a child of God, irrespective of his particular conception of the Supreme Being. In the life of Jesus, the most pure principles of life are reflected. Jesus should accordingly be seen as a paragon of virtue, in whose behaviour the eternal Christ shines through. Some modernists more or less identified Christ with the Holy Spirit, while others interpreted Christ as an amorphous ideal of

21 E.g.: Muurling, *Resultaten van onderzoek en ervaring op godsdienstig gebied* 11, 25; Ph.R. Hugenholtz, 'Het vierde evangelie naar zijne waarde voor onzen tijd', in: F.W.B. van Bell et al., *Voorlezingen over de Bijbelsche berichten aangaande het leven van Jezus, inzonderheid over het Johannes-evangelie* (Amsterdam 1866), 227-267, here 255-256.

22 Members of the Dutch Radical School were the former Walloon Reformed minister A. Pierson, the Dutch Reformed theologians G.A. van den Bergh van Eysinga, J.A. Bruins, Sr., J. van Loon (1838-1908), W.C. van Manen, and H.U. Meyboom, the Lutheran theologian A.D. Loman, the philosopher G.J.P.J. Bolland (1854-1922), and the classicist S.A. Naber (1828-1913). See: Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* 111, 15-17; H. Detering, *Paulusbriefe ohne Paulus? Die Paulusbriefe in der holländischen Radikalkritik* (Frankfurt am Main 1992), 11-100; E. Verhoef, *W.C. van Manen. Een Hollandse radicale theoloog* (Kampen 1994), 50-72.

how man should be. In the perception of both, Jesus and Christ did not totally overlap.²³

Casting doubts on the divinity of Jesus was not unprecedented. Arianism in the fourth century and Anti-Trinitarianism, Socinianism, and Unitarianism in the first centuries after the Reformation, to name the most well-known examples, had already done so.²⁴ The novelty of modern theology in this respect was that its adherents came to question the Evangelists' statements about Jesus by using a methodology analogous to that of the natural sciences: the historical-critical method. Not all modernists held the same views regarding the historical Jesus, the a-historical Christ, and the relation between the two; indeed, one of the main tenets of modernism was that all individuals should have personal religious images and that none of these representations is superior to any other. The predominant modernist interpretation of the biblical Jesus as a paragon of virtue even came to be severely criticised by the aforementioned 'right-wing modernists', who condemned it as a typically nineteenth-century attempt to turn Jesus into the then prevailing ideal of a virtuous, law-abiding citizen.²⁵ In other words, right-wing mod-

23 Reflection on the issue of the relationship between Jesus and Christ intensified in the early twentieth century, due to the rise of malcontentism and right-wing modernism. E.g.: A.W. van Wijk, *De beteekenis van den persoon van Jezus Christus. Vier voorlezingen* (Zwolle 1896); G.A. van den Bergh van Eysinga et al., *Christusbeschouwingen onder modernen* (Baarn [1909]); "Christusbeschouwingen onder modernen", *De Hervorming* 1910-06 (5 February 1910), 41-43; H. Oort, 'Miskennis van Jezus', *Ibid.* 1912-01 (6 January 1912), 1-3; G.J. Heering, 'De Christus en de historische Jezus', *Ibid.* 1913-15 (12 April 1913), 116; H. Windisch, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Christumysterie of historische Jezus', *Ibid.* 1918-06 (9 February 1918), 21-22; 1918-07 (16 February 1918), 25; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, 'Hoofdartikel – Levensgeloof', *Ibid.* 1922-15 (15 April 1922), 113-115; J.C.A. Fetter, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Geloof de moderne Christelijke gemeente in den historischen Jezus?', *Ibid.* 1923-22 (2 June 1923), 170-172; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Christusbeschouwing onder modernen', *Ibid.* 1923-51 (22 December 1923), 402; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, 'Christusbeschouwingen', *Ibid.* 1924-39 (27 September 1924), 306-307; 1924-40 (4 October 1924), 314-315; 1924-41 (11 October 1924), 323-324; J.J. Bleeker, 'De historiciteit van Jezus', *Ibid.* 1926-03 (16 January 1926), 18; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, *De vrijzinnige Godsidee. Een boek over Godsvoorstellingen en over geloof* (Zeist 1928), 205-208; Van Mourik Broekman, *Vrijzinnig protestantisme*, 18-31; D. Drijver, 'Binnenland – Wie zeggen de lieden dat ik ben?', *De Hervorming* 1932-04 (15 April 1932), 26-27; C.M. van Driel, *Schermen in de schemering. Vijf opstellen over modernisme en orthodoxie* (Hilversum 2007), 143-148, 201-211.

24 A detailed overview is given in: E.M. Wilbur, *A History of Unitarianism. Socinianism and its Antecedents* (Cambridge [1945] 1977).

25 H.S. Benjamins, *Een en ander. De traditie van de moderne theologie* (Kampen 2008), 147-153.

ernists chided first-generation modernists for doing the same thing of which the latter accused the Gospel writers: turning Jesus of Nazareth into the person *they* wanted him to be. As stated, first-generation modernists and later-generation modernists who clung to the conceptions and characteristics that had dominated modernism during its formative phase, came to be known as '*oud-modernen*' ('old-school modernists'). Notwithstanding differences existing among them in this respect, all modernists cast doubts upon the orthodox explanation of the marvels Jesus is said to have done according to the Gospels. Because of their rejection of supernaturalism, their religious conceptual universe did not leave room for images and explanations that go beyond human comprehension.

However, human reason was not the only touchstone to determine whether a biblical image or a personal conception of God, Jesus and Christ should be regarded as sound or rather as unsubstantial. In religious life, there were two constituent factors: next to reason, *feeling* was just as important in acquiring a truly personal religious conviction. Reason and emotion were parameters that ideally had to complement each other in order to ensure that religion would not become too rationalistic or too sentimental. Scientific findings and scholarly theories thus should not dictate *what* someone had to believe, but rather *how* he could give proper expression to his religious sentiments.²⁶ If theology would take these findings and theories duly into account, it could and should serve as a cognitive, rational consideration of, and reflection on, what people experienced in their inner life.²⁷ The fact that higher criticism had relegated the conception of Jesus as forgiver of sins to the realm of fantasy did not take away the failings people experienced in their lives. In the eyes of modernists, this 'sense of guilt' had nothing to do with innate depravity, but rather with the ethical, cognitive or moral infirmities of individuals who did not truly listen to their conscience or whose inner voice was not (yet) fully developed.²⁸ Here, reason and feeling converged into an explanation that did justice to both. On the same grounds, conversely, right-wing modernists distanced themselves from this monistic, optimistic explanation: after all, did not their religious feeling convince them of the distance between God and

26 Exemplary is: Ph.R. Hugenholtz, *Het kenmerkende der moderne richting* (Amsterdam 1878), 27-32.

27 H.S. Benjamins, "*Innig godsdienstig en wetenschappelijk*". *Vroomheid en rationaliteit in de vrijzinnige theologie* (Groningen 2013), 8-14.

28 E.g.: H.R. Warmolts, *Wat de moderne theologie leert over de zonde. Zesde brief aan dr. A.L. Poelman* (Groningen 1862); Roessingh, *De moderne theologie in Nederland*, 135-143, 190.

humans, and of the validity of stressing God's transcendence rather than his immanence?²⁹

As regards the conceptual side of faith, the weight attached to feeling and personal experience left a lot of room for variety and variability. Reason was no constant either. With the progress of time, man came to understand more and more of the universe surrounding him and the forces and laws that structured natural and human life. On the basis of both feeling and reason, modernists rejected creedalism. The religious persuasion of an individual is difficult to reduce to precise terms, let alone the religious conviction of a group of people. Written confessions of faith should not be interpreted as virtually infallible doctrinal formulations, as was the case in most Christian churches, but rather as historical documents that give expression to the faith of a particular religious community at a particular moment in time. The practice whereby one could only become a member of a certain church when he endorsed the written confessions of faith that this particular church accepted as its doctrinal basis was a severe curtailment of the freedom of conscience, modernists argued.³⁰ For, in their literal sense, creeds do not possess eternal value. If a person is a sincere seeker of Truth, his religious conceptions will inevitably be subject to change. Being religious should mean being actively immersed in an ongoing process of inner, spiritual growth. Therefore, modernists defined their religious singularity in terms of 'principles' rather than in terms of fixed concepts and tenets.³¹ A modernist way of believing was in essence highly individualistic, since the conceptions an individual had of God were never totally the same as those of someone else.

29 E.g.: Roessingh, *Rechts-modernisme*, 214–218; J.F. Beerens, *Het rechts-modernisme* (Utrecht 1920), 11; Van Driel, *Schermen in de schemering*, 140–143.

30 E.g.: A.F. Mackenstien, 'De Constituanten', *De Hervorming* 1873–07 (13 February 1873), 1–2, here 1; [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'Wat wij willen', *Ibid.* 1876–49 (7 December 1876), 1–2; M.E. van der Meulen, 'Ingezonden stukken', *Ibid.* 1877–08 (24 February 1877), 4; Z., 'Ingezonden stukken – Moet eene kerk eene belijdenis hebben?', *Ibid.* 1877–42 (20 October 1877), 3–4; W.C. van Manen, 'De synodale besluiten tegen de gewetensvrijheid', *Onze Godsdienstprediking* 11.22 (1878), 373–390; E.J.W. Koch, 'Nog een woord over de aanneming tot lidmaat der gemeente als besluit van het voorafgaand catechetisch onderwijs', *De Hervorming* 1880–14 (3 April 1880), 54–55; F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr., 'Binnenland – De kerkelijke kwestie', *Ibid.* 1883–43 (27 October 1883), 169–170, here 170; E. Snellen, 'Overvragen', *Ibid.* 1886–04 (23 January 1886), 13–14, here 13.

31 E.g.: S. Hoekstra Bz., 'Belang van het vrije kritische onderzoek voor het godsdienstig geloof van de gemeente', in: Van Bell et al., *Voorlezingen over de Bijbelsche berichten*, 269–315; Matthes, *De nieuwe richting*, 95–109; W.C. van Manen, *Het godsdienstig karakter der nieuwe richting, tegen de bedenkingen van dr. J. Cramer verdedigd* ('s-Hertogenbosch 1869), 21.

Another characteristic of modernism was the endeavour to harmonise Christianity with current trends in culture, science and society.³² The boom of the natural sciences, industrial improvements, and technical innovations gave man the opportunity to control nature more than ever before. Of course, 'evolutionism', Darwin's theories about the origin of species and the descent of man, had a major impact on contemporary thinking,³³ but other 'isms' contributed just as much to the emergence of a 'modern' worldview. Naturalism challenged the belief in the existence of a supernatural domain that was not subordinate to the laws of nature.³⁴ Empiricism stated that true knowledge could only be obtained through sensory perceptions.³⁵ Historism strengthened the idea that a critical examination of written sources from the past should enable mankind to reconstruct '*wie es eigentlich gewesen*' (how bygone ages actually were).³⁶ The 'hand of God' became more and more unnecessary to explain events formerly seen as unexplainable. The laws of nature could not be changed, but their effects were 'makeable'. All these currents dramatically changed the way man looked towards the world surrounding him and his own position within it, causing conventional religion, so modernists believed, to become less and less plausible and acceptable. Modernists wanted to preserve Christianity as a powerful, influential and creative social force in the age to come.³⁷ In order to actualise this hope, receptivity to present scholarly thought and scientific discoveries was called for. Churches and in-

32 Van der Wall accordingly states that "the modernist programme could be summarized in one word: adaptation." Quoted from: E.G.E. van der Wall, *The Enemy Within: Religion, Science, and Modernism* (Wassenaar 2007), 7.

33 For a detailed account of the reception of Darwin's ideas in Dutch theology, see: B. Leeuwenburgh, *Darwin in domineesland* (Nijmegen 2009).

34 On naturalism and supernaturalism in general, see: R.H. Nash, *Faith and Reason. Searching for a Rational Faith* (Grand Rapids 1988), 253-255; W.B. Drees, *Religion, Science and Naturalism* (Cambridge 1996); G. Keil, 'Naturalism', in: D. Moran, *The Routledge Companion to Twentieth Century Philosophy* (London and New York 2008), 255-307.

35 On empiricism in general, see: A. Boyce Gibson, *Theism and Empiricism* (London 1970); J.D. Law, *The Rhetoric of Empiricism. Language and Perception from Locke to I.A. Richards* (Ithaca and London 1993).

36 On the relationship between historism and modern theology, see: H.J. Paul, *Het moeras van de geschiedenis. Nederlandse debatten over historisme* (Amsterdam 2012), 101-104.

37 F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr. eloquently phrased this as follows: "For religion to remain the inspiring principle in everyday life, it should develop in accordance with the times and wear the garment of its time. If not, then the children of their time might still respect it, but put it away in the cabinet as an antiquity, which they had outgrown, nonetheless." Quoted from: F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr., *Geloofsstrijd. Eene schets uit het kerkelijk leven onzer dagen* (Amsterdam 1879), 35.

dividual believers should take current developments into account and adjust their religious imagery to these 'signs of the times'. It was modernists' aspiration to detect those signs and to grasp which consequences those signs could or would have for society in general, and the position of religion within society in particular.

Modernists were convinced that their interpretation of the Christian sources of faith and the Christian tradition did more justice to God's intentions with life on earth than the interpretation of others. In their eyes, clinging to the verbatim words of Scripture or trying to harmonise evident biblical inconsistencies with each other was a misunderstanding of the true meaning of the Bible. In the articles, books and sermons they wrote to popularise their ideas, modernists repeatedly accentuated this point.³⁸ They were blamed in orthodox circles for lacking piety. Yet, as demonstrated in chapter 6, piety was in fact a central notion to their philosophy of life; they simply had a different understanding of what 'piety' meant than orthodox Protestants. The image of God as Father was an especially dominant theme in their devotional literature.³⁹

Children were by no means overlooked. Although it was debated to what extent and in what way they should be informed about the current state of affairs in biblical studies,⁴⁰ children should not be misled by reading the Old

38 Examples are mentioned in chapter 3.

39 E.g.: 'Wat is in naam der wetenschap aan de Christelijke gemeente afgeëischt?', *De Hervorming* 1876-35 (31 August 1876), 1-3, here 3; J.D.C. Koch, "In hoeverre geeft de persoonlijkheid van Jezus steun aan 't geloofsleven der Christenen?", *Ibid.* 1882-42 (21 October 1882), 165-166, here 166; D. André de la Porte, 'Hebben de modernen, voor de godsdienstige vorming hunner kinderen, hulp te zoeken bij de voorstellingen der orthodoxie?', *Ibid.* 1888-18 (5 May 1888), 69-70, here 70; J.W.B., 'Jezus' ideaal', *Ibid.* 1893-49 (9 December 1893), 193; D.C. de Haas, 'De opwekking van Christus in verband met de oude wereldbeschouwing', *Ibid.* 1902-33 (16 August 1902), 258-259, here 259; W. Zaalberg, 'Het Evangelie', *Ibid.* 1903-28 (11 July 1903), 217-218, here 217. See also: L.N. de Jong, *Vrije vroomheid. Aard, grondslag en praktijk van het vrijzinnig-godsdienstig leven* (Baarn 1911); Benjamins, *"Innig godsdienstig en wetenschappelijk"*, 8-14.

40 This issue was repeatedly brought up for discussion during meetings of modernist teachers of religion. E.g.: J.H. Maronier, 'Binnenland – Vergadering van dames aan zondagscholen van vrijzinnige richting werkzaam', *De Hervorming* 1884-23 (7 June 1884), 91-92; J.H. Maronier, 'Binnenland – Vierde algemeene vergadering van dames die aan zondagsscholen in vrijzinnigen geest werkzaam zijn', *Ibid.* 1886-25 (19 June 1886), 98-99; D. André de la Porte, 'Binnenland – Zesde algemeene vergadering van dames, die aan zondagscholen in vrijzinnigen geest werkzaam zijn', *Ibid.* 1890-27 (5 July 1890), 107; T.A. van Eck, 'Onze zondagschoolvergadering', *Ibid.* 1904-29 (16 July 1904), 228-229, here 228; J.A. Wolters, 'Het werk der zondagsschool', *Ibid.* 1911-21 (27 May 1911), 162-164; G., 'De 18e algemeene vergadering van vrijzinnige zondagsscholen in Nederland', *Ibid.* 1912-30 (27 July 1912), 234-235.

and New Testaments to them as historically accurate reports. It was better to familiarise them with the symbolic character of Scripture from an early age onwards. Otherwise, modernists feared, they would lose their faith during adolescence, when they would be intellectually able to ascertain that the biblical marvels and imagery do not correspond with reality and that these, consequently, could never have taken place.⁴¹ In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, several modernist children's Bibles were issued in which youngsters were imbued with love of nature and encouraged to develop personal conceptions of God. Biblical narratives, of which many, particularly in the Old Testament, were deemed inappropriate for children,⁴² were presented as figments of imagination.⁴³ Modernists' primary goal was to imbue children with the fundamental ethical attitude that is best expressed by the Great Commandment in Mark 12 to love God and to love one's neighbour as oneself. In the wake of these children's Bibles, a considerable amount of modernist brochures, novels, magazine articles, and catechetical compendia were published,⁴⁴ which wanted to instil children with a sense of morality and common decency, and strengthen their ability to discern between good and evil

41 E.g.: 'Godsdienstige opvoeding', *De Hervorming* 1880-32 (7 August 1880), 126; J.H. Maronier, 'Nederlandsche Protestantenbond – Tweede algemeene vergadering van dames, verbonden aan zondagscholen van vrijzinnige richting', *Ibid.* 1882-23 (10 June 1882), 90; J.J. van Hille, 'De 15e Nederlandsche Protestantendag', *Ibid.* 1887-46 (12 November 1887), 181-182, here 181; E. Snellen, 'De Bijbelsche wonderverhalen en het gemoedsleven onzer kinderen', *Ibid.* 1888-01 (1 January 1888), 1-2, here 2 [erroneously dated '1 January 1887']; D. André de la Porte, 'Hebben de modernen, voor de godsdienstige vorming hunner kinderen, hulp te zoeken bij de voorstellingen der orthodoxie?', *Ibid.* 1888-17 (28 April 1888), 65-66, here 65; 1888-18 (5 May 1888), 69-70, here 69; [W.E. Salverda de Grave in:] 'Binnenland – De Protestantendag', *Ibid.* 1896-45 (7 November 1896), 178-179, here 179; C. Hille Ris Lambers, 'Waarheid in de opvoeding', *Ibid.* 1902-03 (18 January 1902), 19-20, here 19; 'Een nieuwe Kinderbijbel', *Ibid.* 1902-25 (21 June 1902), 193-194.

42 E.g.: J.H. Maronier, 'Binnenland – Tweede samenkomst van dames', *Ibid.* 1880-48 (27 November 1880), 190; J.H. Maronier, 'Nederlandsche Protestantenbond – Commissie voor de zondagsscholen', *Ibid.* 1886-16 (17 April 1886), 63; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Wel overwogen?', *Ibid.* 1897-11 (13 March 1897), 42; L. Knappert, *Ons godsdienstonderwijs in verband met de opvoeding onzer kinderen* (Assen 1905), 23.

43 Exemplary in this respect is the *Bijbel voor jongelieden*, a children's Bible written by the brothers-in-law H. Oort and I. Hooykaas and published between 1871 and 1878. See also: Buitenwerf-van der Molen, *God van vooruitgang*, 70; W.J. van der Meiden, "Zoo heerlijk eenvoudig." *Geschiedenis van de kinderbijbel in Nederland* (Hilversum 2009), 125-130.

44 For an account of Dutch liberal Protestant children's literature, particularly in the twentieth century, see: R. van Schoonderwoerd den Bezemer, *Vroom en Vrij. De geschiedenis van de vrijzinnig protestantse jeugdliteratuur in Nederland* (The Hague 2001).

as well.⁴⁵ The authors of modernist youth literature and religious instructors constantly stressed that it was not their goal to breed 'little modernists'. Instead, they claimed, their only aim was to help children to acquire a religious faith of their own.⁴⁶ The Bible was not the only book that could arouse religious feelings; contemporary literature could also be helpful in this respect.⁴⁷ Moreover, next to the historical development of Christianity, children should be instructed in the fundamentals and evolution of other religions too.⁴⁸

Modernists' relative receptiveness to religions other than Christianity was rooted in a latent hope for a universal religion of mankind. In other words, among modernists, the hope was cherished that all human beings would eventually be spiritually united. Such a universal religion, it was believed, could only emerge out of liberal Christianity. After all, it could only come into being if religious life was able to develop in all freedom – that is, without being restrained by doctrines, creeds, and beliefs that conflicted with human reason and did not stem from personal emotions. Modernists were firmly convinced that their religious principles, the 'true' principles of Jesus, satisfied both the heart and the mind. When more and more people shared in the fruits of progress, their principles would therefore ultimately be acceptable to all. The latent hope for a universal religion found expression in a strong interest in com-

45 E.g.: 'Godsdienstige opvoeding', *De Hervorming* 1880-37 (11 September 1880), 146; 'Het geheim van de rechte verhouding tusschen ouders en kind', *Ibid.* 1882-03 (21 January 1882), 9; W. Zaalberg, 'Godsdienstige verdraagzaamheid', *Ibid.* 1889-24 (15 June 1889), 94; D. André de la Porte, 'Binnenland – Zesde algemeene vergadering van dames, die aan zondagscholen in vrijzinnigen geest werkzaam zijn', *Ibid.* 1890-27 (5 July 1890), 107; C.S.M. Kuenen, 'Zeventiende algemeene vergadering van onderwijzeressen en onderwijzers aan zondagsscholen in vrijzinnigen geest', *Ibid.* 1910-29 (16 July 1910), 227-228, here 227.

46 E.g.: 'Mededeelingen betreffende het Nederlandsche Protestantenvond', *Ibid.* 1876-01 (6 January 1876), 3; 'Godsdienstige opvoeding', *Ibid.* 1880-33 (14 August 1880), 129-130, here 130; Een onderwijzeres der zondagschool, 'Aan den heer Jb. van Gilse', *Ibid.* 1882-09 (4 March 1882), 34; J.H. Maronier, 'Nederlandsche Protestantenvond – Tweede algemeene vergadering van dames, verbonden aan zondagscholen van vrijzinnige richting', *Ibid.* 1882-23 (10 June 1882), 90; J. Herderscheë, 'God en de kinderen', *Ibid.* 1888-08 (25 February 1888), 29-30, here 30; 'Een nieuwe Kinderbijbel', *Ibid.* 1902-25 (21 June 1902), 193-194, here 193; S.D.A. Wartena, 'Ingezonden – Het doel der zondagsschool', *Ibid.* 1917-28 (14 July 1917), 230.

47 E.g.: *Leerstof voor de zondagschool, uitgegeven door den Nederlandschen Protestantenvond* (Amsterdam 1880).

48 E.g.: in his *Schetsen en tafereelen. Godsdienstig leesboek voor school en huis*, published in 1872, P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr. discussed not only the history of Christianity, but also the development of Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, and Islam. See also: Buitenwerf-van der Molen, *God van vooruitgang*, 72.

parative religious studies, with which in the Dutch context the name of C.P. Tiele (1830-1902) was particularly connected.⁴⁹

3 The Roots and Dual Character of Modernism

It is important to stress that modernism was not meant to be a radical and profound break with historical Christianity. Rather, modernists intended to purge contemporary Christianity of elements that they considered as deviations from the attitude to life 'as Jesus had meant it to be'. Modernising Christianity, they believed, was all about going back to the 'pure' spirit of Jesus and reforming church and society on the basis of that spirit. Modernists were by no means unique in their pretension to give expression to Christianity 'as it was meant to be'. The sixteenth-century Reformers, for instance, also claimed to restore Christianity to its original, pure form.⁵⁰ Neo-Calvinism, to name another example, intended to bring Reformed orthodoxy 'in rapport' with the present by returning to, and consequently applying, the true principles of Calvinism and as such of pure Christianity⁵¹ – the neo-Calvinist statesman D.P.D. Fabius (1851-1931) accordingly argued in all sincerity that Adam had not only been the first human, but also the first neo-Calvinist.⁵²

Modernists did not trace their roots all the way back to Adam – first and foremost because they rejected the historicity of Genesis –, but some of them acted in a similar manner to Fabius by claiming to recognise their own attitude to life in several of the most important persons in the history of mankind. P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr. (1834-1911), to take the most extreme example, believed that, among others, Buddha, Socrates, the prophet Isaiah, John the Baptist, Jesus, the apostle Paul, Francis of Assisi (1181/1182-1226), Martin Luther (1483-1546), William of Orange (1533-1584), and the philosopher Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) had actually all been 'modernists'.⁵³ Soon after Hugenholtz made this statement in 1898, retrospectively incorporating historical figures into their own

49 A.L. Molendijk, *The Emergence of the Science of Religion in the Netherlands* (Leiden and Boston 2005), 70-79.

50 E.g.: L.W.E. Rauwenhoff, *Geschiedenis van het protestantisme 1. Van de Hervorming tot aan den Munsterschen Vrede* (Haarlem 1865), 17.

51 M.E. Brinkman and C.E. van der Kooi, *Het calvinisme van Kuyper en Bavink* (Zoetermeer 1997), 10.

52 Fabius made this statement in the *Geldersche Kerkbode* in 1926. Referred to in: 'Kerknieuws – De Geref. Kerken', *Algemeen Handelsblad* XCIX.32246 (7 December 1926), evening paper, 10; C.G. van der Staaij, 'D.P.D. Fabius (II)', *Zicht* XVII.6 (December 1992), 219-229, here 219.

53 [P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr.], 'Ons Allerheiligen', *De Hervorming* 1898-45 (5 November 1898), 179-180.

ranks became less accepted among modernists. In the twentieth century, when, as chapter 3 shows, they began to re-emphasise the Christian instead of the merely religious character of their attitude to life, modernists nonetheless continued to affirm vis-à-vis orthodoxy that their beliefs were no historical 'anomaly'. They stressed that modernism was rooted in a broad, centuries-old '*vrijzinnige*' ('liberal' or 'heterodox') tradition in Christianity that was as old as, or even slightly older than, Protestantism. This was what H.T. de Graaf (1875-1930), at the time one of the leading modernist opinion makers, implied when he remarked in 1915 that the then commonly acknowledged synonymy of the words 'modernist' and '*vrijzinnig*' was of a temporary kind.⁵⁴ In other words, De Graaf considered modernism as one – hitherto the last one – of several phases in the development of *vrijzinnig* Protestantism. J. Lindeboom elaborates upon this conviction in his threefold *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* (*History of Liberal Protestantism*). The third volume is entirely devoted to modernism. The second volume ends in 1870, when "liberal Protestantism had developed into, and was defined by, modernism," and begins with the life of the German man of letters G.E. Lessing (1729-1781), who divulged and defended the theological ideas of the aforementioned Reimarus.⁵⁵ The first volume is devoted to what Lindeboom, following the German theologian E. Troeltsch (1865-1923), calls 'neo-Protestantism'. This 'formative phase' of *vrijzinnig*, liberal Protestantism was shaped by men who accentuated the individual character of faith at the expense of the role of the church as institution of salvation, wanted church and state to be separated, and stressed that the Bible was not the exclusive source of Revelation. As such, these men had distinguished themselves from mainstream or 'old' Protestantism, which the sixteenth-century Reformers had brought into being and which Lindeboom considered to be in line with medieval Christianity. In contrast, 'neo-Protestantism' was rooted in the biblical humanism of the Renaissance. It had been further shaped by anti-Trinitarian thinkers such as Michael Servetus (1511-1553) and Faustus Socinus (1539-1604) in the sixteenth century, and Enlightenment theology in the eighteenth century.⁵⁶

54 H.T. de Graaf, 'Leestafel – "Orthodox of modern"', *De Hervorming* 1915-48 (27 November 1915), 435.

55 J. Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* II. *Tot 1870* (Assen 1933), 5.

56 J. Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* I. *Tot Lessing: het ontstaan van het neo-protestantisme* (Huis ter Heide 1929), 9. See also: A.L. Molendijk, 'Vrijzinnigheid ruim opgevat. Johannes Lindebooms "Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme"', in: M.P.A. de Baar and M. van Dijk (eds.), *Herinnering en identiteit in het vrijzinnig protestantisme. Opstellen aangeboden aan prof.dr. E.H. Cossee bij zijn afscheid als hoogleraar* (Hilversum 2009), 15-26.

There is reason to question whether such a quest for a 'liberal' current in the history of Christianity is not rather anachronistic – as Lindeboom himself candidly acknowledged.⁵⁷ Moreover, tracing modernism all the way back to the Renaissance would be too much in this section, merely providing a brief analysis of the roots of modernism.⁵⁸ Here, it is sufficient to indicate the influences that helped to bring modernism into being from the late eighteenth century onwards – the period with which the second volume of Lindeboom's *Geschiedenis* begins. It is legitimate not to go any further back in time, because, as K.H. Roessingh argued, modern theology attempted to harmonise Christianity with the scientific-scholarly culture that developed as of the late eighteenth century.⁵⁹

This culture was the result of a movement known as the 'Enlightenment' or '*Aufklärung*'. While it is difficult, if not impossible, to give a straightforward definition of this term, at least one thing is indisputable: at the basis of the Enlightenment was the conviction that human reason should be the measure of everything.⁶⁰ The eighteenth century, in which the Enlightenment reached its peak, is therefore called the 'Age of Reason'. The fact that a theory or practice had been handed down through the ages was no valid criterion to accept it if it ran counter to what could be cognitively determined. Regarding the Christian faith, this meant that the Bible and the church were not authoritative because they claimed to have a divine origin – they only had authority insofar as they had a basis in reason. In fact, the concept of 'faith' as such implied that one's intellectual faculties were not yet fully developed: accepting the existence of God should not be a matter of belief, but of knowledge – it could be cognitively ascertained that he existed. Nature was structured in accordance with regularities and laws, these serving to show that there was rational intelligence (a Creator-God) behind it. Many Enlightenment philosophers were deists: they contended that God only reveals himself in nature, rejecting the concept of 'supernaturalism' and the idea that God also reveals himself in a

57 Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* I, 11-12.

58 A brief overview of the roots and development of liberal Protestant theology in the Netherlands, beginning with the so-called 'Radical Reformation', is given in: E.H. Cossee, 'Tegendraadse theologie. Terugblik op vier eeuwen vrijzinnigheid in Nederland', in: W.B. Drees (ed.), *Een beetje geloven. Actualiteit en achtergronden van het vrijzinnig christendom* (Amsterdam 1999), 181-200.

59 Roessingh, *De moderne theologie in Nederland*, 3-4.

60 An overview of the different definitions of 'Enlightenment' since the late eighteenth century is given in: J. Schmidt, 'Introduction: What is Enlightenment? A Question, Its Context and Some Consequences', in: J. Schmidt (ed.), *What is Enlightenment? Eighteenth-Century Answers and Twentieth-Century Questions* (Berkeley etc. 1996), 1-44.

way (through Christ) that defies rationality. Some of them accepted the Bible as a book containing reasonable ethical lessons, but not as (a source of) revelation itself.⁶¹ In Protestant theology an attempt was made to take reason as point of departure, just as in deism, while retaining the notion of a supernatural revelation, contrary to deism. The 'rationalistic supernaturalism' or, as it was also called in the Dutch context, '*oud-liberalisme*' ('old liberalism'), thriving around 1800, was no solid theological system, but rather an incoherent blend of intellectualism and the concepts of Christian orthodoxy. Its champions did not give up the premise that God reveals himself in nature *and* in Jesus Christ. The latter's exceptional virtuousness and honesty made it reasonable for them to see him as a supernatural being.⁶² The underlying idea of their theology was that reason and revelation cannot conflict with each other: if there is a 'basic truth' in the Bible, the source of revelation, that seems to go against reason, then reason has apparently not yet developed far enough. In rationalistic supernaturalism, revelation therefore basically had the function of filling gaps in human knowledge. The church historian F.R.J. Knetsch gives an apt description of the line of reasoning behind rationalistic supernaturalism. Its champions, trying to make sense of the traditional Christian belief that man needs to be redeemed with God through Christ,

argued that it was impossible for reason to become aware of [this need for] redemption, and subsequently thanked God for giving us notice thereof through his revelation. This notice is beyond what is implied in the nature of things and what can be derived from nature through reasoning – it was thus super-natural, yet by no means irrational. On the contrary, by accepting revelation, it was possible to satisfyingly continue reasoning.⁶³

Although modernist theologians would denounce many of the premises of rationalistic supernaturalism, they held on to the principle that the content of faith, and the concepts and forms in which faith finds expression, ought to be reasonable.

61 On deism, see: E. Feil, 'Deism', in: M. Delon (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Enlightenment* 1 (London and New York [2001] 2013), 361–364.

62 Roessingh, *De moderne theologie in Nederland*, 18–19.

63 F.R.J. Knetsch, 'Petrus Hofstede de Groot (1802–1886). Vriendelijk volksvoorlichter of ideoloog van het imperialisme?', in: G.A. van Gemert et al. (eds.), *"Om niet aan onwetendheid en barbarij te bezwijken". Groningse geleerden, 1614–1989* (Hilversum 1989), 129–146, here 129–131.

In the Dutch context, modern theology could be seen as a more radical attempt at theological reform than the attempt that the originators of the so-called *Groninger godgeleerdheid* (Groningen theology, named after the Dutch university town where these theologians lectured), made in the 1820s and 1830s. On the one hand, modern theology was a critique of Groningen theology. On the other hand, Groningen theologians and their sympathisers in the Dutch Reformed Church, referred to as the Groningen movement, had an unorthodox view on Christ and salvation, differed with orthodoxy in matters of doctrine, and were preoccupied with the idea of moral uplifting. As such, they helped to pave the way for modern theology and the modernist movement.⁶⁴ Just like the advocates of rationalist supernaturalism, such Groningen theologians as L.G. Pareau (1800-1866) and P. Hofstede de Groot (1802-1886) believed in the existence of a supernatural realm next to nature; to know God, not only nature but also the Bible had to be acknowledged as a source of divine revelation. However, the Groningen theologians did not accept reason as the ultimate basis to found faith on. They believed that man's inner life was at the basis of faith. In retrospect, they found a legitimation of this view in the philosophy of F.D.E. Schleiermacher (1768-1834), who taught that intuition and feelings collectively form a separate, independent faculty of human consciousness in which individuals experience reality directly, as opposed to the indirect awareness of reality through reasoning.⁶⁵ Instead of stating that faith stems from a feeling of absolute dependence on an infinite power (God), as Schleiermacher did, Groningen theologians described faith rather as the expression of a feeling of love for God.⁶⁶ In turn, God showed his love for mankind in Jesus Christ, the person in whom he revealed himself and through whom he wanted to lead individuals to true humanity. Jesus, Groningen theologians stated, was God in human shape. He carried the image of the perfect human. The purpose of history was to make individuals identical in form to him. Jesus was the Redeemer, because his faultlessness reminded people of their own ethical imperfection, and his life gave them an example to follow in order to combat this imperfection. The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, knowledge of which

64 M. Wijt-Posthuma, *Herinneringen aan de opkomst der moderne richting op het platteland in Friesland* (Amsterdam 1906), xv; E.H. Cossee, "De geheele godsdienst behoort tot het gevoel". Romantische elementen in kerk en theologie', *De Negentiende Eeuw* VIII.2 (1984), 91-107, here 101, 104; E.H. Cossee, *Willem Muurling (1805-1882). Een Groninger wordt modern* (Groningen 2009), 24.

65 R.M. Adams, 'Faith and Religious Knowledge', in: J. Mariña (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Friedrich Schleiermacher* (Cambridge etc. 2005), 35-51.

66 E.H. Cossee, *Verwantschap en verwijdering. De Groninger godgeleerden en het unitarisme* (Groningen 1992), 4-5.

is given in the Gospel, had not 'reconciled' humans with God, but had rather been necessary to establish the institution of the church. Just as Jesus had 'educated' – Groningen theologians used this term ('*opvoeden*') themselves – his apostles, the church that these apostles had brought into being had as its *raison d'être* to shape humans after his image. Accordingly, church life was not about accepting doctrines, but about listening to, and internalising, Jesus's teachings – expressed in the motto '*niet de leer, maar de Heer*'.⁶⁷

Under the name of '*evangelischen*', with which they referred to their Gospel-centred piety, the spiritual descendants of Groningen theology and the Groningen movement continued to be present at theological faculties and in church life after the rise of modernism, albeit in rapidly diminishing numbers. The reason for this loss of influence and numerical marginalisation is three-fold. First, when Groningen theology and the Groningen movement emerged, no other views were as progressive and as liberal as those its champions put forward. As of the 1840s, however, ideas that came to be labelled as 'modernist' claimed to be far more progressive and more liberal. Modernists went much further in their intentions of reforming Christianity, church life, and social life, with which they assured themselves of the sympathy of parts of the progressively-minded bourgeoisie that had previously supported the *evangelischen*.⁶⁸ Second, when modernists entered the ecclesial scene, the *evangelischen* got wedged between modernism on the one side and moderate orthodoxy on the other.⁶⁹ They had difficulty keeping their ground in the intensified polarised climate in the Dutch Reformed Church to which the rise of modernism led. Third, Groningen theologians believed in the historical accuracy of the New Testament, but failed to make clear how this belief was rooted in inner life. Apparently, individuals should accept the New Testament as historically accurate because it had a *given* authority, an authority that was non-negotiable. This was a weak spot in Groningen theology, which therefore turned out to be inadequate in the long run.⁷⁰ Several Groningen theologians even joined the modernist ranks. Among them was the theology professor W. Muurling (1805-1882), who felt that modernism was merely the ultimate,

67 J. Huizinga, *Verspreide opstellen over de geschiedenis van Nederland* (Amsterdam [1982] 2007), 243-244; J. Vree, *De Groninger godgeleerden. De oorsprongen en de eerste periode van hun optreden* (Kampen 1984), 330-342; R. Klooster, *Groninger Godgeleerdheid in Friesland, 1830-1872* (Leeuwarden 2001), 15-31.

68 L.G.J. Verberne, *Geschiedenis van Nederland VIII. Nieuwste geschiedenis* (Amsterdam 1938), 90.

69 Klooster, *Groninger Godgeleerdheid in Friesland*, 292.

70 Roessingh, *De moderne theologie in Nederland*, 40-43; Benjamins, *Een en ander*, 53-57.

inevitable consequence of Groningen theology.⁷¹ Other *evangelischen*, such as Hofstede de Groot, explicitly denied that they had paved the way for modernism; for them, modernists' anti-supernaturalist interpretation of the Gospel, particularly modernists' denial of New Testament miracles as historical facts, was an attack on the essence of Christianity itself.⁷²

The decisive factor that brought modernism into being as a current within academic theology was the emergence of the *Tübinger Schule*, named after the German university town where the founder of this school, F.Chr. Baur (1792-1860), conducted his scholarly research. Methodologically, Baur integrally and systematically studied the New Testament in a historical-critical way. In his exegesis of New Testament texts, he thus tried to find out how, and in which historical contexts, these texts have come into being, while rejecting any supernatural interpretation of them, and building his explanation upon reasonable, verifiable arguments. Baur combined his historical-critical methodology with insights borrowed from the German philosopher G.W.F. Hegel (1770-1831), whose philosophy is labelled 'Idealism'. Simply put, Hegel argued that reality has a *spiritual* nature: world history should be seen as the ongoing development of what he called the '*Weltgeist*'. Hegel discerned a dialectical pattern in world history, which is usually summed up in terms coined by the German philosopher I. Kant (1724-1804) and popularised by Kant's student J.G. Fichte (1762-1814): thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. Every event in world history is the result of ideas lying behind it. Those ideas can be challenged by other ideas, resulting in another event. This event is the *antithesis* of the event to which it is a reaction, the *thesis*. Out of this dialectic between thesis and antithesis, a higher unity can emerge that harmonises the two: the *synthesis*. In due course, when it begins to get challenged, this synthesis can itself become a thesis, after which the whole process starts all over again.⁷³ Baur interpreted the emergence of Christianity in such a dialectical way. In his view, an ideological struggle had been waged among the earliest followers of Jesus. Against the idea of those, led by the apostle Peter, who claimed that followers of Jesus should strictly obey the Jewish laws, others, led by the apostle

71 Cossee, *Willem Muurling*, 15; K. van Berkel, *Universiteit van het Noorden: vier eeuwen academisch leven in Groningen 1. De oude universiteit 1614-1876* (Hilversum 2014), 602-605.

72 E.g.: P. Hofstede de Groot, *De moderne theologie in Nederland. Volgens de hoofdwerken harer beroemdste voorstanders* (Groningen 1870), 54-55. See also: Klooster, *Groninger Godgeleerdheid in Friesland*, 239; J. Vree, *Kerk, huis, school en staat. Leven, werk en vriendenkring van P. Hofstede de Groot (1844-1886)* (Hilversum 2017), 460-464, 548-550.

73 M. Forster, 'Hegel's Dialectical Method', in: F.C. Beiser (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel* (Cambridge etc. 1993), 130-170.

Paul, championed the idea that belief in Jesus no longer required strict obedience to those laws. To put this in dialectical terms: Petrine Christianity was the thesis and Pauline Christianity the antithesis. By looking at formative Christianity as such, Baur was able to make sense of inconsistencies and contradictions found within different New Testament fragments. According to him, a synthesis was reached in post-apostolic, second-century Catholic Christianity: the *principles*, not necessarily the specific regulations, of the Jewish laws still applied, but without genuine faith in Christ these principles were meaningless.⁷⁴ Baur's historical-critical, Idealistic studies had a tremendous impact on academic theology. One of his students, D.F. Strauss (1808-1874), based his *Das Leben Jesu* (*The Life of Jesus*), published in 1835, on historical-critical methodology and the dialectics of Hegelian Idealism. For Strauss, a supernatural interpretation of the Gospel was the thesis. A purely rationalist interpretation was the antithesis. According to Strauss, however, both interpretations focused on the historicity of the stories about Jesus and hence failed to recognise that these stories were *myths*, presented as dealing with historical facts, but actually being symbolic modes of expression for religious-ethical ideals. Interpreting the Gospel stories about Jesus in such a mythical way was the synthesis. This, Strauss stressed, did not mean that these stories were 'false': the verbatim text might not refer to actual events, but the ideals expressed in it remained eternal truths.⁷⁵

There is much more to say about the Tübingen School, the theological views it has brought forth, and its relation to German philosophy, but here it is sufficient to note that the views of theologians as Baur and Strauss were at the basis of what came to be known as 'modern theology'.⁷⁶ A distinction should be made between modern theology and the modernist movement: they were closely related, but their origin was not entirely the same. This was, at

74 Law, *The Historical-Critical Method*, 62. Other authors state that Pauline Christianity was the thesis and Petrine Christianity the antithesis. E.g.: G.E. Ladd (D.A. Hagner ed.), *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids [1974] 1993), 3. For more on Baur, see: G. Fraedrich, *Ferdinand Christian Baur. Der Begründer der Tübinger Schule als Theologe, Schriftsteller und Charakter* (Gotha 1909); J. Zachhuber, *Zwischen Idealismus und Historismus. Theologie als Wissenschaft in der Tübinger Schule und in der Ritschlschule* (Leipzig 2015).

75 W.C. Placher, *A History of Christian Theology. An Introduction* (Louisville 1983), 277. An overview of the influence Strauss exerted on Dutch theology is given in: H.W. Obbink, *David Friedrich Strauss, in Nederlandse reacties op zijn theologie in de negentiende eeuw* (Utrecht [1973]).

76 Buitenwerf-van der Molen, *God van vooruitgang*, 17-19. For more on the Tübingen School, see: H. Harris, *The Tübingen School* (Oxford 1975).

least, what modernists themselves repeatedly accentuated.⁷⁷ Modern theology emerged within an academic context, in an endeavour to let theology keep pace with contemporary methods and insights developed in science and the humanities. The modernist movement, on the other hand, came into being due to “all kinds of historico-cultural circumstances – social, political, ecclesial, literary.”⁷⁸ Roessingh, who is quoted here, did not specify these circumstances, but he undoubtedly referred to the processes listed under the label ‘modernisation’ in my introductory chapter, as well as to the dissatisfaction among the faithful with the way in which church life responded to these processes. The distinction between modern theology and the modernist movement was made particularly to refute the orthodox claim that modern theology was merely ‘artificially’ transplanted from academia to the church and hence did not ‘organically’ emerge within the bosom of the church itself.⁷⁹ Modernists such as H.C. Lohr (1836-1922) and I. Hooykaas (1837-1894) stated that while modern theology tried to do justice to ‘the demands of reason’, the modernist *movement* was the result of a cry from the heart of those who felt that in religious life only the individual conscience should matter.⁸⁰

4 Modernism before the Founding of *De Hervorming*

J. Herderscheê, the first to write a book on Dutch modernist history, considers 1840 to be the year that marked the beginning of modern theology in the Netherlands.⁸¹ Roessingh, on the other hand, mentions the year 1848.⁸² Both of

77 E.g.: ‘De richtingen in de protestantsche kerken xvi’, *De Protestant* v.6 (5 February 1887), 2-3, here 2; ‘Nederlandsch Protestantenvond – Brielle’, *De Hervorming* 1878-12 (23 March 1878), 2; P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., ‘Onze leestafel – “Een bonte bundel”’, *Ibid.* 1882-48 (2 December 1882), 3; L. Knappert, ‘Nog eens de moderne theologie’, *Ibid.* 1889-29 (20 July 1889), 113-114, here 114; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Berichten, enz. – “Fata morgana”’, *Ibid.* 1900-51 (22 December 1900), 395-396; J. Herderscheê, ‘Ingezonden stukken – “De modern-godsdienstige richting”’, *Ibid.* 1906-48 (1 December 1906), 381; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, ‘Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Geestelijke stromingen in den bond’, *Ibid.* 1919-46 (15 November 1919), 207-208, here 207.

78 Roessingh, *De moderne theologie in Nederland*, 2.

79 H. Oort, ‘Pro’, in: H. Oort and Ph.J. Hoedemaker, *De modern-godsdienstige richting* (Baarn 1906), 1-15, here 5.

80 Herderscheê, *De modern-godsdienstige richting in Nederland*, 77-78.

81 *Ibid.*, 81. See also: H. Berkhof, *Christelijk geloof* (Kampen [1973] 2007), 283-284; T.R. Barnard, ‘Moderne theologie’, in: G. Harinck et al. (eds.), *Christelijke Encyclopedie* 11 (Kampen 2005), 217-218, here 217; Benjamins, *Een en ander*, 57.

82 Roessingh, *De moderne theologie in Nederland*, 106.

them, however, link the emergence of modern theology in the Netherlands to the academic career of one theologian: J.H. Scholten (1811-1885). In 1840, Scholten became a professor at the *rijksatheneum* in Franeker, which was an institute providing lectures on an academic level yet lacking the right to confer academic degrees on its students.⁸³ In his inaugural lecture on the life of Jesus, Scholten unmasked the view of the then leading Groningen theology of Jesus as 'docetic' – an adjective referring to the thought, condemned as a heresy by the early church, that Jesus the Nazarene only *appeared* to be a person of flesh and blood, but never actually had a human body – by giving full emphasis to Jesus's human nature. In his argument, echoes from Strauss's attempt to come to a historically accurate biography of Jesus, laid down in *Das Leben Jesu*, could be heard.⁸⁴ In 1848, five years after his appointment as a professor at Leiden University, Scholten published the first part of a two-volume dogmatic study that would turn out to be his most important and most influential publication, *De leer der Hervormde Kerk in hare grondbeginselen, uit de bronnen voorgesteld en beoordeeld* (*The Principles of the Doctrine of the Reformed Church, Expounded and Evaluated from the Sources*).⁸⁵ Although he did not as such challenge the doctrines incorporated in the so-called Three Forms of Unity, accepted at the synod of Dordt in 1618 and 1619 as the official teachings of the Dutch Reformed Church, Scholten made clear that he could not interpret those doctrines in the same way as the theologians at the synod of Dordt had done. This was because Scholten identified the 'inner testimony of the Holy Spirit', the sole basis on which he felt it was legitimate to believe in God, with the voice of reason. Scholten's argument implied that if man's faculty of reason becomes more developed, the interpretation of doctrines necessarily changes. He still believed in the doctrine of predestination, for instance, but interpreted it, by taking contemporary scientific and scholarly insights into view, as the ultimate fulfilment of man's ethical potential instead of as the absolution of sin.⁸⁶

While the roots of modern theology in the Netherlands are thus traced back to either 1840 or 1848, the modernist movement is usually said to have

83 M. Groen, *Het wetenschappelijk onderwijs in Nederland van 1815 tot 1980: een onderwijskundig overzicht 1. De wetgeving* (Eindhoven 1983), 24-25.

84 Chr. Sepp, *Proeve eener pragmatische geschiedenis der theologie in Nederland van 1787 tot 1858* (Leiden [1867] 1869), 333-335.

85 The English title is borrowed from: Bos, *Servants of the Kingdom*, 268.

86 Brouwer, *De moderne richting*, 26-36, 39, 49-55; Roessingh, *De moderne theologie in Nederland*, 117-147; Roessingh, *Het modernisme in Nederland*, 61-110; A.J. Rasker, *De Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk vanaf 1795. Haar geschiedenis en theologie in de negentiende en twintigste eeuw* (Kampen 1974), 115-119; Benjamins, *Een en ander*, 57-70.

emerged at the end of the 1850s. It was in these years that Scholten's disciples and those of another 'father of modern theology', C.W. Opzoomer (1821-1892), began mounting the pulpit for the first time. Having a position as a professor in philosophy at Utrecht University since 1846, Opzoomer argued that the only path towards knowledge is empiricism, constituting the totality of human perceptions and observations.⁸⁷ In the 1850s, Scholten and Opzoomer both arrived at the worldview, outlook on life, and interpretation of Christianity as sketched in the second section of this chapter, the only difference between them being that the lines along which they legitimised their monistic, anti-supernaturalist, and optimistic convictions were not identical. Scholten had ultimately reached the conclusion that it was justified to have the religious persuasion he had because logical reasoning could not result in anything else. For Opzoomer, who had initially been an orthodox rationalist, the rejection of miracles and the acknowledgement of God's existence in a monistic sense were legitimate because he found the confirmation thereof in his inner life. Although Scholten and Opzoomer would continue to publish on theophilosophical issues after the 1850s, their respective epistemological positions essentially stayed the same. As ministers, Scholten and Opzoomer's students preached a Christianity in which reason and emotional life played an equally important role. It was historical-critical research of the Bible, to which at the time particularly the name of the Leiden professor A. Kuenen (1828-1891) was attached, from which the first modernist ministers derived their images of the divine. This research, centred on the notion of historicity, presented a Jesus who was the incarnation of ethical purity instead of a miracle worker.⁸⁸

A last 'father' of modern theology in the Netherlands was S. Hoekstra (1822-1898). Contrary to Scholten and Opzoomer, who applied the empirical methodology as used in the natural sciences to the philosophy of religion, Hoekstra tried to explain religious belief from a psychological and anthropological perspective. Believing in God is justified and verified neither through reasoning nor on the basis of emotions, he argued, but because it is an intrinsic human need. In their confrontation with reality, Hoekstra maintained, humans come to realise that they are imperfect beings. The dissatisfaction therewith makes people yearn for delivery from their imperfectability, leading them to believe in a higher power that is willing and able to support them in this endeavour. Is this 'higher power' not merely an illusion, therefore? No,

87 Brouwer, *De moderne richting*, 15-23, 38-39, 46-48; Roessingh, *De moderne theologie in Nederland*, 147-165; Roessingh, *Het modernisme in Nederland*, 61-110.

88 Roessingh, *De moderne theologie in Nederland*, 110-111; Roessingh, *Het modernisme in Nederland*, 101-105.

Hoekstra stressed: the images and words that people use to give expression to this higher power are products of the mind, but the higher power itself is real – otherwise people would never have had any notion of being imperfect in the first place. After all, such a notion stems from the voice of conscience resounding within them. And in this voice of conscience, God, the higher power, reveals himself.⁸⁹ Hoekstra became a professor at the Mennonite theological seminary in Amsterdam 1857, a position he would combine with a professorship at the University of Amsterdam from 1877 until his retirement in 1892. Compared to Scholten and Opzoomer, his influence on modern theology therefore made itself felt slightly later and eventually remained more limited. Yet the three modernist subcurrents that would challenge the Scholtenian-Opzoomerian modernist mainstream most vehemently – ethical modernism in the 1870s, malcontentism in the 1900s and, as a continuation of the latter, right-wing modernism from the 1910s – appealed to Hoekstra.

As previously stated, Scholten's and Opzoomer's students began to enter church life as ministers at the end of the 1850s. They not only preached the modern theological ideas that they had learned during their studies from their pulpits; they also propagated these ideas through popularising books and brochures. The year in which the first of these popularising publications was issued is generally taken to be the actual 'birth year' of the modernist movement.⁹⁰ That year was 1857 and the publication in question was C. Busken Huet's (1826-1886) *Brieven over den Bijbel* (*Letters on the Bible*).⁹¹ In their sermons and writings, modernist ministers propagated their monistic, anti-supernaturalist, optimistic, and individualistic worldview with much fervour, convinced as they were that only their ideas could preserve the social significance of Christianity in the future. Although orthodox Protestants and some later modernists blamed them for demolishing religious life without building something new, these early modernist ministers were in fact driven

89 Brouwer, *De moderne richting*, 56-64; Roessingh, *De moderne theologie in Nederland*, 166-182; Roessingh, *Het modernisme in Nederland*, 106-109; Rasker, *De Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk vanaf 1795*, 122-124; E.H. Cossee, 'A.D. Loman en S. Hoekstra Bzn., illustere dissenters op de bres voor het modernisme', in: A.G. Hoekema and S.E. Hof (eds.), *Illustere dissenters. Aspecten van de positie der Nederlandse lutheranen en doopsgezinden* (Zoetermeer and Woerden 1996), 71-93, here 81-83; Benjamins, *Een en ander*, 76-78.

90 Herderscheê, *De modern-godsdienstige richting in Nederland*, 100; Roessingh, *Het modernisme in Nederland*, 116; Buitenwerf-van der Molen, *God van vooruitgang*, 29.

91 A content analysis and reception history of this publication is given in: D.J. Bos, "Doch Christenen zijn nu eenmaal geen koeien." Over "Vragen en antwoorden. Brieven over den Bijbel" (1857-1858) van Cd. Busken Huet', in: F.G.M. Broeyer and D.Th. Kuiper (eds.), *Is 't waar of niet? Ophefmakende publicaties uit de 'lange' negentiende eeuw* (Zoetermeer 2005), 153-191.

by strong apologetic motives. They were devoted to bridging what they perceived as a growing gap between Christianity and culture.⁹²

The emerging modernist movement received a warm welcome from those with leading positions in Dutch intellectual and cultural life. It gained support in the bourgeoisie, the social stratum consisting of those who did not economically depend on manual labour and who were in a position to at least inform themselves about what was going on in intellectual and cultural life.⁹³ This was so, because the modernist movement offered a new way of believing, based on a theology 'verified' by contemporary scientific and scholarly insights, and harmonised with developments in cultural life. 'Liberalism' is the word that characterises cultural life in the mid-nineteenth century Netherlands (and the Western world at large). It was marked by a firm belief in progress and the power of reason, a strong focus on the individual and the development of his abilities, an optimistic mentality, a tolerant attitude regarding matters of faith, and a fixation on public morals.⁹⁴ As a current in politics, liberalism took society to be a sum of individuals and as such served the interests of the bourgeoisie, defending a social life in which the government would interfere as little as possible and in which the nobility and the church would not have a privileged position. Because modernism equally championed the autonomy of the individual, claiming that the only authority in religious issues was man's inner self, the view on modernism as the religious equivalent to political liberalism was unanimously endorsed in modernist circles until well into the 1880s, and was still being defended in the 1930s.⁹⁵ As stated in the introduction, D.J. Bos consequently links the emergence of the modernist movement

92 E.G.E. van der Wall, 'Believing, Belonging, and Adapting. The Case of Religious Modernism', in: B.E.J.H. Becking (ed.), *Orthodoxy, Liberalism, and Adaptation. Essays on Ways of Worldmaking in Times of Change from Biblical, Historical and Systematic Perspectives* (Leiden and Boston 2011), 91-114, here 94.

93 Herderscheë writes that interest in the modernist movement "manifested itself particularly in the bourgeoisie, the nucleus of society and religious life." See: Herderscheë, *De modern-godsdienstige richting in Nederland*, 119. See also: Roessingh, *Het modernisme in Nederland*, 138; H.J. Busé, 'Het modernisme in Friesland omstreeks 1870', *Nederlandsch Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis* xv.2 (1919), 81-114, here 81-85, 109; Verberne, *Geschiedenis van Nederland*, 63; R.J. Staverman, *Volk in Friesland buiten de kerk* (Assen 1954), 131; P.Th. van Rooden, *Religieuze regimes. Over godsdienst en maatschappij in Nederland 1570-1990* (Amsterdam 1996), 33; Schuurisma, *Jaren van opgang*, 120; G.Th. Jensma, *De gemaskerde God. François HaverSchmidt en het Oera Linda-boek* (Zutphen 2004), 108; G. Harinck and L.G.M. Winkeler, 'De negentiende eeuw', in: H.J. Selderhuis (ed.), *Handboek Nederlandse kerkgeschiedenis* (Kampen [2006] 2010), 603-734, here 672-673.

94 For this mid-nineteenth century cultural liberalism in the Netherlands, see: R.A.M. Aerts, *De letterheren. Liberale cultuur in de negentiende eeuw: het tijdschrift "De Gids"* (Amsterdam 1997).

95 Chapter 9 zooms into this matter in more detail.

to what he calls “the rise of a new middle class, with the desire and the ability to relate to their religious leaders on a more equal footing,” as well as to the absence of an ‘apprenticeship’ for aspiring ministers in the Dutch Reformed Church.⁹⁶ The finding that modernism met with a response among culturally- and politically-liberal middle groups might also explain why it got a foothold not only in the socially heterogeneous Dutch Reformed Church, but also, and in higher relative numbers, in the socially more homogeneous church communities of Remonstrants, Mennonites, and Lutherans. The bourgeoisie was overrepresented in these communities.⁹⁷

However, the rapid rise of the modernist movement had already ended by the mid-1860s. The initial enthusiasm with which modernism was hailed in intellectual and culture life dampened. Moreover, the modernist movement was quickly confronted with ministers who went through a serious crisis of faith, came to the conclusion that the Bible and the church were no necessary ingredients of religious life, and decided to resign their office. Some of them continued to have modernist sympathies, examples of whom are mentioned in chapter 3, but others set themselves up as fierce opponents of the modernist movement, the consequences of which are analysed in chapter 8.

In addition, the expectation of the first modernist ministers that they would be welcomed in their congregations as liberators turned out to be a misjudgement. They felt that the supernaturalist interpretation of Christianity, and the dogmas stemming from it, hindered people from developing a truly personal, heart-felt faith and from truly interiorising the principles of life on which the words and conduct of Jesus were based.⁹⁸ The idolisation of Jesus, they reasoned, obscured what was actually expressed in his life and preaching, the true meaning of which historical-critical modern theology was revealing. It was therefore necessary to no longer sermonise about Jesus the miracle worker and Redeemer, but to preach to the faithful an image of Jesus that was, as modernist ministers believed, historically accurate. On Easter Sunday 1861, P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., at the time a Dutch Reformed minister in Hoenderloo, and A.D. Loman (1823-1897), at the time a Lutheran minister in Amsterdam, straightforwardly told their congregations that the physical resurrection of Jesus was a myth.⁹⁹ Several Dutch Reformed ministers did the same,

96 Bos, *Servants of the Kingdom*, 281. See also: *Ibid.*, 327.

97 H. Verwey-Jonker, *Emancipatiebewegingen in Nederland* (Deventer 1983), 67-73.

98 Roessingh, *Het modernisme in Nederland*, 132-135.

99 P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., *Indrukken en herinneringen* (Amsterdam 1904), 80. Hugenholtz does not mention an exact year. He was a minister in Hoenderloo from 30 May 1858 until 20 October 1861. The journalist A.J. Klei says Hugenholtz denied the physical resurrection of

including H. Oort (1836-1911) in Santpoort on Easter Monday 1863,¹⁰⁰ Ph.R. Hugenholtz (1821-1889) in Amsterdam during Easter 1864,¹⁰¹ and J. van Loenen Martinet (1840-1918) in Heenvliet, A.C. Duker (1837-1915) in Geervliet, and W.C. van Manen (1842-1905) in Abbenbroek during Easter 1866.¹⁰² These ministers drew the ultimate conclusion from what Scholten had argued in his *Leer der Hervormde Kerk*: if it all came down to the *spirit* in which seventeenth-, eighteenth-, and early nineteenth-century Dutch Reformed theologians had interpreted what they regarded as church doctrine, and not to their interpretations themselves, then it was no longer necessary to stick to those doctrines at all. While Scholten had still used a term like 'predestination', for example, his students did not, and championed absolute doctrinal freedom. Moulding one's personal convictions in doctrinal terms, they felt, was an impediment to individual religious growth. Instead of a liberation from suffocating dogmatic

Jesus in 1859. The historian P.P. de Baar thinks it was 1860. The theologian A. Vos believes it was 1861. Other sources referring to the incident in Hoenderloo do not make mention of a particular year. In his memoirs, Hugenholtz suggests that he held his Easter sermon in 1861 – he remarks that this sermon led to a permanent estrangement between him and his orthodox congregation, and that he therefore felt the need to leave Hoenderloo. See: 'Hugenholtz Jr. (Petrus Hermannus)', in: J.P. de Bie and J. Loosjes (eds.), *Biographisch woordenboek van protestantsche godgeleerden in Nederland* IV (The Hague 1931), 390-395, here 390; A.J. Klei, 'De Vrije Gemeente looft prijzen uit', *Trouw* XXXIV.9968 (27 October 1976), 2; P.P. de Baar, 'Petrus Hermannus Hugenholtz (1834-1911). Stichter van de Vrije Gemeente', *Ons Amsterdam* XLV.12 (December 1993), 308; A. Vos, 'Vanuit de duisternis naar het licht', in: H. Eschbach and R. van Putten (eds.), *Als God de hemel opent. Uitzien naar meer werk van de Geest* (Zoetermeer 2012), 94-107, here 104; M.F. Buitenwerf-van der Molen, 'Waarlijk!? Het vraagteken achter het uitroepeten', *Present* III.3 (April 2012), 6-7, here 6. Loman's 1861 Easter sermon was published as: *Wat zoekt gij den Levende bij de Dooden* (Amsterdam 1862). See also: Cossee, 'A.D. Loman en S. Hoekstra Bzn.', 76.

100 Oort's necrologist C.E. Hooykaas says that Oort gave the Easter sermon in question during his *second* year in Santpoort. As he became a minister in Santpoort in December 1860, his second year began in December 1861 and ended in November 1862. Reefhuis mentions the year 1863 in his commemorative booklet on the history of the Dutch Reformed Church in Santpoort. In retrospect, Oort himself said it was probably 1863. See: H. Oort, 'Voor ruim veertig jaar', *De Hervorming* 1907-03 (19 January 1907), 19; C.E. Hooykaas, 'Levensbericht van Henricus Oort', in: *Handelingen en mededeelingen van de Maatschappij der Nederlandsche Letterkunde te Leiden, over het jaar 1928-1929* II. *Levensberichten* (Leiden 1929), 77-126, here 85; H. Reefhuis, *De Dorpskerk in Santpoort. 150 jaar in vogelvlucht* (Santpoort 1994), 32.

101 'Hugenholtz (Philip Reinhard)', in: De Bie and Loosjes (eds.), *Biographisch woordenboek van protestantsche godgeleerden in Nederland* IV (The Hague 1931), 386-390, here 387-388.

102 H. Oort, 'Levensbericht van Johannes van Loenen Martinet', in: *Handelingen en mededeelingen van de Maatschappij der Nederlandsche Letterkunde te Leiden, over het jaar 1918-1919* II. *Levensberichten* (Leiden 1919), 53-65, here 54-55.

ties, as modernist ministers expected, many faithful considered modernist theological ideas and ecclesial ideals to be an attack on Christianity itself.¹⁰³

The rise of the modernist movement therefore met with a fierce orthodox reaction. After the first King of the Netherlands, William I (1772-1843), had given the Dutch Reformed church community new regulations in 1816, a discussion occurred on whether the regulation to uphold the 'teachings of the Dutch Reformed Church' meant that ministers, elders, and deacons had to integrally endorse the Three Forms of Unity or not.¹⁰⁴ This question became more pressing than ever with the modernists' plea for absolute doctrinal freedom, giving certain orthodox the final push to organise themselves as a separate faction, under the name of '*Confessioneele Vereeniging*' ('Confessional Association') in 1864. In doing so, these orthodox church members redoubled their efforts to make church incumbents sign the Three Forms of Unity.¹⁰⁵ It was in the circle of this association that Abraham Kuyper, who had been one of Scholten's students at the theological faculty in Leiden, rose to prominence in the late 1860s. In the course of the 1870s, however, Kuyper and the *Confessioneele Vereeniging* gradually drifted apart – primarily due to Kuyper's views on church reform (which are briefly sketched in chapter 4).

In 1867, only ten years after its emergence, the development of the modernist movement took a decisive turn. That year, the decision that the Dutch Reformed Church synod had taken in 1852 to give all male church members a say, directly or indirectly, in the appointment of church councils – correlating with democratising tendencies in the new Dutch constitution of 1848 – came into effect. This decision had thus been taken before modernists began to enter the ecclesial scene, but it was strongly defended in modernist circles in the 1860s nonetheless.¹⁰⁶ After all, as Mosselmans and Van Gilse would explain in *De Hervorming* in 1873, it was completely in line with modernist ideals. Granting the right to be involved in the election of incumbents to all male members of the Dutch Reformed Church meant giving these members the responsibility to decide upon their spiritual growth for themselves, and the opportunity to get rid of orthodox church councils that thwarted this growth.

103 Roessingh, *Het modernisme in Nederland*, 114-115; N.A. Bruining, *Kerk en kerkgaan* xii. *Het modernisme in de gemeenten* (Huis ter Heide 1930), 8-9.

104 Dealt with in: J. Reitsma, *Geschiedenis van de Hervorming en de Hervormde Kerk der Nederlanden* (Groningen 1893), 363-433.

105 A brief history is given in: E.G. Hoekstra and M.H. Ipenburg, *Handboek christelijk Nederland. Kerken, gemeenten, samenkomsten en vergaderingen* (Kampen 2008), 196-197.

106 L. Knappert, *Geschiedenis der Hervormde Kerk onder de Republiek en het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden* 11. *Geschiedenis der Nederlandsche Hervormde Kerk gedurende de 18^e en 19^e eeuw* (Amsterdam 1912), 338; Buitenwerf-van der Molen, *God van vooruitgang*, 30-31.

Moreover, it strengthened the position of the local congregation at the expense of the church as a whole, the regulations of which hindered the modernist movement from thriving to the full.¹⁰⁷ Modernists expected that most members of the Dutch Reformed Church indeed longed to be freed from the doctrinal chains in which their church councils kept them. Yet the opposite happened: orchestrated by the *Confessioneele Vereeniging*, the church council elections in many Dutch Reformed congregations resulted in orthodox victories in 1867 and subsequent years. As chapter 4 shows, these victories, and the difficult position into which these victories manoeuvred them in countless congregations, incited thousands of modernist-minded members of the Dutch Reformed Church to eventually join the Remonstrant Brotherhood – an exodus that contributed to the transformation of the latter into an all-modernist church community.¹⁰⁸ Yet modernists did not defencelessly hand the Dutch Reformed Church over to orthodoxy. After 1867, factional quarrels intensified, and the need to come to some kind of organisation made itself felt in modernist circles.

Since 1866, modernist theologians met annually in Amsterdam, during the first week after Easter, to discuss theological, ecclesial, and social issues with each other.¹⁰⁹ Several modernist ministers working in, or in the vicinity of, the Frisian town of Dokkum, who occasionally came together from 1866 on in a theological discussion group that one of them, the Dutch Reformed minister A.S. Carpentier Alting (1837–1915), christened ‘*Onze Krans*’ (‘Our Circle’), copied this initiative. In 1868, they decided to convene annual meetings for all modernist ministers in the three northernmost provinces of the Netherlands.¹¹⁰ At

107 [B.C.J. Mosselmans and J. van Gilse], ‘Reorganisatie van de kerk’, *De Hervorming* 1873–31 (31 July 1873), 1–2. See also: Ignotus [B.D. Eerdmans], ‘Reactie of vooruitgang?’, *Theologisch Tijdschrift* XLIII (1909), 1–16, here 6.

108 Knappert, *Geschiedenis der Hervormde Kerk onder de Republiek en het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden* II, 338; J. van Eijnatten and F.A. van Lieburg, *Nederlandse religiegeschiedenis* (Hilversum 2005), 274.

109 Historical overviews are given in: A. Kuenen, *Gedachtenisrede in de vergadering van moderne theologen, 7 April 1891: 1866–1891* (Leiden 1891); H. Oort, *Gedachtenisrede in de vergadering van moderne theologen op 13 April 1915* (Zaltbommel 1915); G.A. van den Bergh van Eysinga and J. Lindeboom, *1866–1940. Gedachtenisrede in de vergadering van moderne theologen, 2 April 1940 / 25 jaren moderne theologie gespiegeld in 25 vergaderingen van moderne theologen* (Haarlem [1940]); S.L. Verheus, *Honderd jaar vergadering van moderne theologen (1865–1966). Kleine kroniek van een eeuw verbondenheid in vrijheid, op verzoek van het moderamen, ter gelegenheid van de honderdste vergadering* (s.l. [1966]).

110 D. Jansen, “Kan er uit Nazareth iets goeds komen?” “Onze Krans” te Dokkum: een opmaat van de Nederlandse Protestantenbond, *Documentatieblad voor de Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis na 1800* XIX.44 (June 1996), 1–18, here 1–3, 14–15. Jansen shows that there is much confusion regarding the build-up to the founding of the *Nederlandsche Protestantenbond* in historiography on the NPB, particularly regarding the history of *Onze Krans*.

the first of these meetings, held on 27 October that same year, the Dutch Reformed B.W. Colenbrander (1836-1923) and W. Zaalberg suggested establishing a “permanent association of modernists,” one that would include both ministers and modernist-minded churchgoers, and that would be active all year round. However, the idea was rejected. The majority of ministers present at the meeting were apparently against any kind of centralisation in the modernist movement that had no other purpose but to organise modernists more tightly. Colenbrander therefore put forward an amended proposal during the second meeting of modernist ministers in the northern provinces, on 22 October 1869. Instead of an association of modernists as such, he now proposed to establish an organisation with the specific objective to counteract ‘confessionalism’, the current in Christianity, in both its Protestant and Catholic form, that did not want to tolerate any views conflicting with church doctrines. Contrary to what Colenbrander and Zaalberg had envisioned in 1868, this organisation would not be open only to modernists. Moreover, although confessionalism was a particular threat in the Dutch Reformed Church, members of other church denominations should explicitly be welcomed into it as well. After all, confessionalism also made itself felt in society at large, for example in the zeal with which some orthodox Protestants and Roman Catholics advocated denominational schools.¹¹¹ The Catholic variant of ‘confessionalism’ was usually called ‘ultramontanism’.¹¹²

Colenbrander had success this time. Together with the Dutch Reformed ministers N.C. Balsem (1836-1884), J.F. Corstius, and the aforementioned Carpenter Alting and Zaalberg, he was appointed at the same meeting to flesh out his proposal to create an anti-confessionalist association. On 18 March 1870, during a meeting of modernist ministers in the northern provinces specially convened by this quintet to concretise their plans, an association with the name ‘*Gewetensvrijheid*’ (‘Freedom of Conscience’), striving for “the preservation and advancement of absolute freedom of conscience in church and society,” was proposed. Those who attended the meeting gave the quintet, along with five non-ministers, the mandate to prepare the actual formation

111 [I. van den Bergh], *De Nederlandsche Protestantenvbond, 1870-1895* (Amsterdam [1895]), 3. The paragraph as a whole is also based on: B.W. Colenbrander, *Beknopte geschiedenis van het Christendom I* (Arnhem 1888), 279-281; Krijger, ‘De organisatorische spin in het vrijzinnige web’, 40-41.

112 Exemplary in this respect is Mosselmans’s exclamation that “confessionalism in the Protestant Church is what ultramontanism is in the Church of Rome. They are siblings.” Quoted from: [B.C.J. Mosselmans], *Het Ultramontanisme. Eene toespraak in eene openbare vergadering* (Arnhem [1873]), 11. See also: W.C. van Manen, *Ultramontaansch Utopia: een land van belofte? Met een vertaling van den Syllabus* (Arnhem 1876).

of the association. Because complaints about involvement with social issues were raised during a discussion on *Gewetensvrijheid* at the annual meeting of modern theologians in Amsterdam, this provisional committee of ten decided to limit the sphere of activities of the association-to-be to church life. It also decided to hold an inaugural meeting in Utrecht on 15 July 1870. There, the name '*Gewetensvrijheid*' was replaced with '*Nederlandsche Protestantenbond*', probably to accentuate the religious nature of the association, to stress that the association was meant to be a league of local branches, and on analogy of the names similar leagues of modernist Protestants carried abroad.¹¹³ At a follow-up meeting, taking place in Utrecht on 11 October 1870, some final decisions were made. The aim of the NPB was definitively formulated as "the preservation and promotion of evangelical freedom in the Protestant church denominations." Every year, a general assembly would be convened at a different location, but always on or around 31 October, Reformation Day. Finally, C.W. Opzoomer was elected as the first official chairman of the NPB.¹¹⁴

Although the urge to counteract confessionalism was generally felt in modernist circles, the NPB did not immediately attract much support. The number of those who joined the association in the first year of its existence was even "so small," as chairman Opzoomer lamented at the first annual meeting of the NPB, held in Utrecht in 1871, that "many of us have come to question if this first general assembly ought to be the last." Opzoomer had expected that joining the NPB, established "to uphold the true spirit of the Reformation [and] to withstand a strong rival, which [...] seeks to kill the soul of Luther," would have been a rather obvious step for all anti-confessionalist Protestants, "because we carry within us the awareness that the grand spirit of the Reformers is also our spirit." However, potential sympathisers, whom he found among "the friends of science" (intellectuals) and in "the industrious and (right-)thinking

113 Chapter 11 deals with these leagues outside the Netherlands. That the NPB wanted to be a vanguard is exemplified by the way the name of the association was written. As of the general assembly of 1872, it was called '*het Nederlandsch Protestantenbond*', because the linguists M. de Vries (1820-1892) and L.A. te Winkel (1809-1868) considered the word '*bond*', treated as a masculine noun in common parlance, to be a diminutive of the neuter noun '*verbond*'. (Both words mean 'league' in English.) As of the general assembly of 1878, the NPB was called '*de Nederlandsche Protestantenbond*' again.

114 J. Steur, 'Archief van het hoofdbestuur van den Nederlandschen Protestantenbond, 1870-1925', in: *Inventarissen van Rijks- en andere archieven, van Rijkswege uitgegeven, voor zoover ze niet afzonderlijk zijn afgedrukt* IV (The Hague 1933), 140-158, here 140-143; [Van den Bergh], *De Nederlandsche Protestantenbond 1870-1895*, 3-5; Krijger, 'De organisatorische spin in het vrijzinnige web', 41; T.E.M. Krijger, 'De Protestantenbond als kerk der toekomst. De geschiedenis van een vervlogen ideaal (1868-1923)', in: E.J. Tillema (ed.), *Vrijzinnig Verleden* (s.l. 2017), 3-36, here 6-7.

bourgeoisie,” were reluctant to become NPB members, because of a lack of enthusiasm for the formation of the kind of group that the NPB wanted to be. Those potential sympathisers were still oriented towards their own congregations, considering a national league of anti-confessionalist branches as unnecessary and as a potential threat to their freedom to make their own decisions.¹¹⁵ This was the same objection to the NPB that Kuenen raised in early 1872. Confessionalism, he reasoned, was a threat that made itself primarily felt at the congregational level. As a league of branches consisting of members with *different* ecclesial backgrounds, the NPB was thus unsuited to meeting its aim: after all, the Remonstrant members of an NPB branch, for example, had nothing to do with what was going on in the local Dutch Reformed congregation. Moreover, Kuenen feared that the NPB, an association concerning itself with religious issues, could only realise its aim if all modernists conformed to the decisions it made. In religious issues, however, only the individual conscience should have the decisive voice: “we should neither give up a piece of our independence, nor bear the responsibility for measures devised and executed by a certain collectivity.”¹¹⁶

A second, related reason not to join the NPB, Opzoomer recognised, had to do with the circumstance that, in spite of its ambition to include both modernist and non-modernist opponents of confessionalism, the NPB had so far gained sympathy only among the former. In addition, its founding fathers and its first board members were all modernists. In modernist circles, it was therefore feared that the development of the NPB into a pan-modernist instead of a general anti-confessionalist association might deprive modernists of the support of the so-called *evangelischen* and moderate orthodoxy in the attempt to ‘uphold and advance Evangelical freedom’, the stated aim of the NPB.¹¹⁷

115 C.W. Opzoomer, ‘Toespraak ter opening van de eerste algemeene vergadering van den Nederlandschen Protestantenvond, gehouden te Utrecht den 31 October 1871’, 4-6. This speech was issued as an appendix to: *Verslag der eerste algemeene vergadering van den Nederlandschen Protestantenvond* (Leeuwarden [1871]). See also: T.E.M. Krijger, ‘De Nederlandse Protestantenvond: zelfportretten door de jaren heen’, *Ruimte | Mens & Tijd* 2015-01 (2015), 3-5, here 3. Already in 1862, Opzoomer had accentuated that the modernist movement was a continuation of the sixteenth-century Reformation. See: Opzoomer, *De geest der nieuwe rigting*, 22.

116 A. Kuenen, ‘De moderne richting en de Protestantenvond’, *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad* 1872-02 (11 January 1872), 1-2. Kuenen’s article, also published as a separate brochure, was a response to: Eenige leden van den Nederlandschen Protestantenvond, ‘Een ernstige vraag’, *Ibid.* 1871-152 (21 December 1871), 1-2.

117 Opzoomer, ‘Toespraak ter opening van de eerste algemeene vergadering van den Nederlandschen Protestantenvond’, 6-8. See also: [Van den Bergh], *De Nederlandsche Protestantenvond 1870-1895*, 6-7.

What Opzoomer failed to notice was that there even existed a third reason for potential modernist sympathisers to keep aloof from the NPB. As previously stated, contrary to what its founding fathers originally had in mind, the NPB confined its activities to church life. Modernists who felt that the institution of the church had ceased to serve any purpose, such as L.W.E. Rauwenhoff (1828-1889), blamed the association for this limitation.¹¹⁸

On 18 January 1872, the board of the NPB held a meeting with several modernist theologians and ministers during which it acceded to these objections. This persuaded critics such as Scholten, Kuenen, and Rauwenhoff to become NPB members, and resulted in a reformulation of the aim of the association at the second annual NPB meeting in late October that same year. The NPB was formally changed into “an association of all who want to work together to advance the free development of religious life, both within the circle of church denominations and in any other field.”¹¹⁹ With this more generally formulated aim, Kuenen’s objection was met. The pursuit of doctrinal freedom might only be in the interest of modernist members of the Dutch Reformed Church and, to a lesser extent, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, as Remonstrant and Mennonite modernists were not confronted with confessionalist attempts to expel them from their church communities. The advancement of the free development of religious life, on the other hand, was also in the interest of the latter. In this way, the interdenominational character that the NPB wanted to have was fully legitimised. Moreover, the NPB now accentuated that it did not intend to turn the modernist movement into a tightly organised, centralised *party*, for it did not specify *how* it wanted its members to contribute to this advancement. The new aim was also meant to reassure those who feared that the all-modernist character of the NPB prevented *evangelische* and moderately orthodox Protestants from making common cause with modernists against confessionalism. The NPB now no longer called suspicion upon itself that the advancement of doctrinal freedom was in fact meant to enable modernists gain control in church life. The advancement of doctrinal freedom and the growth of the influence of the modernist movement, out of which the NPB recruited its members, were two separate things. Finally, to gain the sympathy of someone like Rauwen-

118 K.H. Boersema, ‘Rede uitgesproken te Utrecht den 28^{sten} October 1930, ter gelegenheid van het 60-jarig bestaan van den Bond’, in: *Jaarboek NPB 1931* 1, 37-65, here 39; Krijger, ‘De organisatorische spin in het vrijzinnige web’, 42; Krijger, ‘De Protestantenvond als kerk der toekomst’, 8-9.

119 Steur, ‘Archief van het hoofdbestuur van den Nederlandschen Protestantenvond, 1870-1925’, 142. See also: *Verslag NPB 1872*, 4.

hoff, the sphere of activities of the NPB was extended beyond church life as well.¹²⁰

With its new aims, the NPB now appeared to have become an association both for and of modernists. 'Advancing the free development of religious life' did not refer in any way to Christianity and was hence unsuitable to gain support in *evangelische* and moderately orthodox circles. Now that this was clear, however, the NPB could welcome a rapidly growing number of modernists as its members, and soon developed into the organisational centre of the modernist movement.¹²¹ In 1873, the national secretary A.G. van Hamel (1842-1907) could cheerfully inform the general assembly that "the circle that the NPB encompasses has become larger." By attributing part of the growth of the NPB in the last year to the transformation of the Leiden-based *Vereeniging tot handhaving der protestantsche vrijheid* (Association for the Preservation of Protestant Liberty), founded in 1869,¹²² into an NPB branch, Van Hamel pointed to an interesting phenomenon.¹²³ This Leiden association was one of several independent, local associations of modernists that had come into being before or slightly after the founding of the NPB, such as *Licht, Liefde, Leven* (Light, Love, Life) in The Hague in 1865, the *Vereeniging tot handhaving en voortplanting van het liberale beginsel* (Association for the Preservation and Promotion of the Liberal Religious Principle) in Amsterdam in 1868, *Evangelie en Vrijheid* (Gospel and Freedom) in Enschede around 1870, and *Evangelische Vooruitgang* (Evangelical Progress) in Middelburg in 1871.¹²⁴ Eventually, all of these associations would simply affiliate themselves with the NPB, merge with local NPB branches, or liquidate themselves in order to enable an NPB branch to get off the ground. Elsewhere, other existing organised or more informal networks of modernists, such as branches of the philanthropic *Maatschappij tot Nut van 't Algemeen* (Society for Public Advancement), modernist-dominated

120 Krijger, 'De organisatorische spin in het vrijzinnige web', 42.

121 Krijger, 'De Protestantenbond als kerk der toekomst', 9-12. Yet some branches did have *evangelischen* among their members, as in Zuidlaren, Oostwold, and Buitenpost. See: J. Bruinwold Riedel, 'Ingezonden stukken – De evangelischen en de Protestantenbond', *De Hervorming* 1887-35 (27 August 1887), 139-140. In view of the membership of the NPB as a whole, however, their numbers were negligible.

122 'Kerk- en schoolnieuws', *Dagblad van Zuid-Holland en 's-Gravenhage* CCII.27 (2 February 1869), 2.

123 *Verslag NPB 1873*, 6-7.

124 A.I., 'Een Haagsche loterij', *Het Nederlandsch Magazijn* 11.48^(new series) (1866), 379; J. Cramer, 'Eene bevestigingspreek', *Stemmen voor Waarheid en Vrede* v (Amsterdam 1868), 467-483, here 471; P. Smits, *Kerk en stad. Een godsdienst-sociologisch onderzoek met inbegrip van een religiografie van de industriestad Enschede* (The Hague 1952), 222; P.F. van Slijpe, 'Binnenland – Uit Middelburg', *De Hervorming* 1896-48 (28 November 1896), 190.

church councils, and book clubs, were the basis of an NPB branch. Ministers were particularly active in bringing branches into being. The presence of local infrastructures on which the NPB could build, and the enthusiasm of ministers, can, however, only partially explain the rapid growth of the association. Merely by existing, the NPB provided the modernist movement with an organisational focal point as well as a point of identification. As such, it fostered a sense of belonging among modernists that went beyond church walls. Joining the NPB meant expressing solidarity with like-minded Protestants all across the Netherlands and showing oneself to be dedicated to the modernist cause. Moreover, the NPB facilitated a circulation of ideas, people, and resources of which modernists who wanted to organise themselves on the local level could make use.¹²⁵ As the next chapter shows, *De Hervorming* played a crucial role in this process.

125 Krijger, 'De organisatorische spin in het vrijzinnige web', 43-48.

The Modernist ‘Tribune’

1 A Liberal Protestant ‘Gentleman’

A nineteenth-century French expression states that a journal is ‘*un monsieur*’, a gentleman. Obviously, this expression should be taken metaphorically: it suggests that in the content of a newspaper, or any periodical for that matter, the personal preferences and opinions of its editors are implied. In late 1934, however, the Dutch Reformed minister J.J. Meyer (1878-1956), the editor of the church affairs section in the newspaper *Het Vaderland* (*The Fatherland*), took this expression all too literally.¹ As if he was dealing with an actual person, Meyer wrote an obituary notice – indicated by the memorial cross that he used in the heading – for the magazine *De Hervorming*, published in *Het Vaderland* on 25 December 1934. *De Hervorming* had just been issued for the final time. Approvingly, Meyer quoted its editor-in-chief D. Drijver (1879-1946), who resignedly acknowledged that the magazine “had had its day.”²

Yet Meyer was sad to see it disappear, as he made clear in a follow-up article – which was styled as an actual *in memoriam*, also reverentially carrying a cross in its heading – published in *Het Vaderland* four days later. Nostalgically, he called to mind that he had come to know *De Hervorming* in his earliest days as a minister, when he “[had] read the names of those who contributed to the very well-written magazine with awe.” ‘Authoritative’ or ‘leading’, and ‘representative’, were the words most applicable to the magazine, which, he stated, had first been issued as a successor to the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad* (*New Ecclesial Weekly*) in 1875. Meyer was mistaken here. *De Hervorming* had already come to replace the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad* two years before; 1875 was the year in which it was purchased by the NPB. As an opinion magazine for and of the modernist movement, Meyer continued, it had long held a monopoly: “it was modernists’ only magazine with theological significance. The theological professors used it to exchange their views, while it also addressed ecclesial,

¹ See also: Krijger, ‘Een vrijzinnige “meneer”’, 37-39.

² [J.J. Meyer], ‘Tijdschriften – “De Hervorming” †’, *Het Vaderland* (25 December 1934), morning paper C, 12. Meyer referred to: D. Drijver, ‘Binnenland – Afscheid’, *De Hervorming* 1934-11 (21 December 1934), 81-82, here 82.

social, and aesthetic [cultural, TK] questions of the day. [...] Taking the general lead [in modernist circles] was its chief aim." Gradually, in the course of the early twentieth century, changing circumstances had started to impede this aim. New magazines had emerged that targeted specific audiences within the modernist movement, such as members of a particular church denomination, or that limited their scope to a particular region. Nationally distributed dailies as the *Algemeen Handelsblad* (*General Trade Journal*), the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* (*New Rotterdam Newspaper*), and *Het Vaderland* had begun to cover religious affairs more extensively in separate sections, the editors of which not uncommonly sympathised with the modernist movement – Meyer himself may serve as an example in this respect. As a result, *De Hervorming* had been subjected to several editorial changes as of the late 1910s, which, however, only caused it to lose support even more. Further decreasing its appeal was its affiliation with the NPB, which itself had begun to lose its central position within the modernist movement. All in all, Meyer concluded, the history of *De Hervorming* was one of "glory and decay," ultimately going completely to ruin due to the "disintegration and deterioration [...] that threaten the once shining building of the Dutch League of Protestants with [utter] destruction."³

Meyer briefly sketched the history of *De Hervorming*, raising several questions. *De Hervorming*, he mentioned, was 'authoritative' or 'leading'. What did this leading role look like in practice? Which functions exactly did the magazine have in the modernist movement? In order to be 'leading', its editors had to be 'messieurs', in the metaphorical sense this term had in a journalistic context: in helping their modernist audience to form an opinion, they could not hesitate to give their own opinion. At the same time, Meyer characterised *De Hervorming* as 'representative'. In order for their magazine to be so, its editors had to reckon with the circumstance that their audience was multiform and varicoloured, having various interests and ideals. Did the tension between the journal's leading and representative roles cause difficulties and frictions in the modernist movement? Did it ever put the continuation of *De Hervorming* in jeopardy? As Meyer highlighted, the editorial policy of the magazine changed several times. What did these changes imply and what were the motives behind them? Finally, Meyer stressed that *De Hervorming* was unable to retain its position in the modernist movement. Why was that the case? Meyer himself partially answered the question of why *De Hervorming* was leading, representative, subject to editorial changes several times,

3 JJ. Meyer, "De Hervorming" †, *Het Vaderland* (29 December 1934), evening paper C, 2.

and ultimately doomed to disappear, by pointing out its ties to the NPB. But why then did the NPB go through a process of changes that led to, as Meyer phrased it, “reduced viability”?⁴

By giving an in-depth analysis of the history of *De Hervorming*, firmly embedded within the context of the Dutch press in general and the liberal Protestant press in particular, this chapter simultaneously outlines the history of the NPB, and as such of the modernist movement, from 1870 to the 1930s. Subsequent chapters analyse specific aspects of that history in greater detail. The history of Dutch liberal Protestantism runs parallel to, and is mirrored in, the history of *De Hervorming*. But *De Hervorming* did not merely reflect the development of the modernist movement; it also influenced that development. By analysing how it fulfilled and then lost its role as the main platform for discussion in modernist circles, this chapter highlights the fact that no one, to quote C.M. van Driel, “who wants to know the history of Dutch liberal Protestantism can leave *De Hervorming* unread.”⁵

2 *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad*

In 1868, several modernist ministers assembled in the interdenominational *Zaanlandsche Predikantenvereeniging* (Zaanland Association of Ministers), and troubled by the growing number of orthodox victories in Dutch Reformed church council elections, took the initiative to found an opinion magazine dedicated to modernist interests.⁶ According to a short notice in the politically liberal *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, the editors-to-be of this new magazine, the Dutch Reformed minister J. van Loenen Martinet and the Lutheran minister J.H.C. Heijse (1839-1913), were eager to strive for “the promotion of freedom, enlightenment, and truth,” by which they hoped to bring closer “a free

4 J.J. Meyer, “De Hervorming” †, *Het Vaderland* (29 December 1934), evening paper C, 2.

5 Van Driel, “De Hervorming”, 136.

6 The *Zaanlandsche Predikantenvereeniging* was one of many associations that periodically convened meetings in which ministers discussed ecclesial, theological, and social affairs with each other. See: J. Vree, “De kraaienplaag”. Een halve eeuw predikantenverenigingen in de Nederlandse samenleving (1844-1892); in: D.Th. Kuiper et al. (eds.), *Predikant in Nederland (1800-heden)* (Kampen 1997), 107-151. Associations of ministers could have a regional or national, denominational or interdenominational, and theological or political basis. The interdenominational character of the *Zaanlandsche Predikantenvereeniging* is mentioned in: A. de Groot, ‘Loenen Martinet, Johannes van’, in: D. Nauta et al. (eds.), *BLGNP 1* (Kampen 1978), 137; Van Driel, “De Hervorming”, 137; W.C. van Manen, ‘1869 – Januari – 1894’, *De Hervorming* 1894-04 (27 January 1894), 14-15, here 14; J.C. van Slee, ‘De Hervorming – 1875 11 November 1925’, *Ibid.* 1925-45 (7 November 1925), 357-358, here 357.

church in a free state.”⁷ This expression could be frequently heard in modernist circles at the time, but did not summarise a typically modernist ideal. Kuiperians used it as their battle cry as well, though attaching a different meaning to it.⁸ A church was ‘free’ in Kuiperian eyes if it was no longer endangered by unorthodox theology and government interference, while it was ‘free’ from a modernist perspective if creedalism was absent in it. In other newspapers, advertisements reported that the new modernist magazine, to be issued as of 28 January 1869, had the intention “to throw light upon and defend the modernist principles.”⁹ Moreover, it wanted to proactively counteract “the agitation stirred up by confessionalists” and to stimulate engagement concerning church affairs within the modernist community.¹⁰ The magazine was christened ‘*Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad*’ (‘*New Ecclesial Weekly*’), in order to stress that it wished to function as the liberal equivalent to the *Kerkelijk Weekblad* (‘*Ecclesial Weekly*’). The latter magazine had been founded as ‘*Kerkelijk Maandblad*’ (‘*Ecclesial Monthly*’) in 1855 and was, after it had been turned into a weekly in 1865, closely associated to the *Confessioneele Vereeniging*.¹¹

The first issue of the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad*, published by I. de Haan in the North Holland town of Krommenie, opened with an article in which the editors expressed their conviction that only their modernist principles were able to “make religion common property of mankind and guarantee it an everlasting position amidst our generation.”¹² Their magazine was accordingly intended to further these principles. The next three lead articles all dealt with quarrels between modernists and confessionalists. The remaining columns were filled with short announcements and reports; a survey of Dutch and foreign news items of which the editors thought all liberal Protestants in the Netherlands should take notice; a detailed enumeration of all Dutch Reformed, Evangelical Lutheran, Mennonite or Remonstrant ministers who had been called, in the preceding week, as pastors by congregations all across the

7 ‘Binnenland’, *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* xxv.338 (6 December 1868), 8.

8 H. Daalder, *Van oude en nieuwe regenten. Politiek in Nederland* (Amsterdam 1995), 195.

9 E.g.: ‘Bijvoegsel’, *Utrechtsch Provinciaal en Stedelijk Dagblad* 1868-299 (14 December 1868), 5; ‘Binnenlandsche nieuwstijdingen’, *Provinciale Overijsselsche en Zwolsche Courant* LXXXVIII (18 December 1868), 2. The date of issue is mentioned in, e.g.: ‘Advertentiën’, *Opregte Haarlemsche Courant* 1869-04 (5 January 1869), 4; ‘Advertentiën’, *Algemeen Handelsblad* XLII.11542 (6 January 1869), 4.

10 ‘Leeuwarden, 17 December’, *Leeuwarder Courant* CXIV.101 (18 December 1868), 1.

11 ‘Kerkelijk Maandblad’, in: J.H. Brouwer (ed.), *Encyclopedie van Friesland* (Amsterdam 1958), 403.

12 [J.H.C. Heijse], ‘Waarom wij ijveren’, *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad* 1869-01 (28 January 1869), 1-2, here 2.

country (so-called '*beroepingsberichten*'); a section in which the editors briefly answered letters sent to them by readers or antagonists; and advertisements.

The annual subscription fee was *f* 4.60, which at the time was not remarkably cheap for a weekly, but not extremely expensive either. Compared to other religious weeklies, however, the fee of the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad* was rather low. The *Christelijk Weekblad* (*Christian Weekly*), the *Kerkelijk Weekblad*, *De Bazuin* (*The Trumpet*), and the *Kerkelijke Courant* (*Ecclesial Newspaper*), to name just a few examples, annually charged *f* 5.20, *f* 6.-, *f* 6.-, and *f* 8.50, respectively, for a subscription.¹³ Since these magazines did not contain substantially more pages or more advertisements than the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad*, and since there are no archives of publisher De Haan or the *Zaanlandsche Predikantenvereniging* that can be consulted, one can only speculate about the motives behind this marked differentiation in pricing. De Haan, who published other modernist literature as well, was apparently able to keep the printing costs down, or might have given the Zaanland ministers who took the initiative to found the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad* a discount. This last possibility would have been anything but unusual. Publishers were willing to keep the printing costs of a periodical down if they expected that the periodical would attract a lot of subscribers.¹⁴ Seemingly, De Haan believed that the publication of a new religious periodical for the benefit of the modernist movement had enough potential to allow him to charge his clients a low rate. There is every reason to assume this, as there was no other weekly issued modernist opinion magazine in the Netherlands at the time. The *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad*, De Haan and his modernist clients must have thought, would therefore obviously meet a need.

The format of the first issue would basically stay the same in the years to come. The size of the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad*, however, became larger in July 1869. As a result of the abolition of the nearly sixty-year old government measure levying taxes on the publishing of newspapers and journals, which had been introduced during the Napoleonic occupation of the Netherlands, issuing a periodical became a lot easier and less expensive. This legislative amendment came into effect on 1 July 1869.¹⁵ Consequently, the publisher and editors of the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad* decided not to lower the price of an

13 'Lijst der dag- en weekbladen in Nederland, in April 1869 verschijnende', *Staatkundig en Staathuishoudkundig Jaarboekje* xx1 (Amsterdam 1869), 521-525.

14 A description of publishers' roles in Dutch nineteenth- and twentieth-century journalism, is given in: J.M.H.J. Hemels, 'De dagbladuitgever. Van courantiër naar ondernemer', in: J.J. van Cuilenburg, P.C. Neijens and O. Scholten (eds.), *Media in overvloed* (Amsterdam 1999), 40-53.

15 Hemels, *De Nederlandse pers voor en na de afschaffing van het dagbladzegel*, 193.

annual subscription, but to print the magazine on larger sized sheets instead. According to advertisements published in the *Oprechte Haarlemsche Courant*, this decision was primarily inspired by an increasing amount of both subscriptions and potential contributors who were willing to provide the editors with input on an ongoing basis.¹⁶ As of 10 August 1871, the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad* was issued by the Erven B. van der Kamp's publishing house in Groningen.¹⁷ In November, Mosselmans and Van Gilse replaced Van Loenen Martinet and Heijse as its editors, though the latter did stay involved with the weekly as 'regular contributors'.¹⁸ The circumstance that both Mosselmans and Van Gilse were ministers in Groningen at the time probably influenced this editorial substitution.

Fully in line with the phase the Dutch modernist movement was going through, the editors of the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad* and other authors of articles demonstrated a firm belief in the ultimate triumph of liberal, non-dogmatic religiosity. Theologians and ministers who already were, or would become, leading modernist apologists and opinion makers contributed to the magazine. One of them was F. Domela Nieuwenhuis (1846-1919), about whom chapter 7 deals in more detail. In the magazine's issues of 20 and 27 July 1871, he denounced confessionalist objections to a recently published translation of the New Testament, authorised by the Dutch Reformed General Synod.¹⁹ Two of his fellow publicists were the Remonstrant minister B. Tideman Jzn. (1837-1908), who incurred the anger of the Dutch orthodox Jewish community by informing the readers of the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad* about its supposed 'backwardness' and 'clericalism',²⁰ and the telegrapher-belletrist A. Admiraal (1833-1878), who poured out vials of wrath upon Kuyper in an 1872 article.²¹ Other contributors included the then well-known Reformed ministers J. Hooykaas Herderscheê (1822-1886), E.J.W. Koch (1828-1895), W. Muurling, and

16 'Advertentiën', *Oprechte Haarlemsche Courant* 1869-153 (2 July 1869), 4; 1869-159 (9 July 1869), 4; 1869-165 (15 July 1869), 4.

17 [J. van Loenen Martinet and J.H.C. Heijse], 'Bericht', *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad* 1871-133 (10 August 1871), 1.

18 Mentioned in the colophon of the 1871 Christmas issue. See also: 'Binnenland', *Nieuwe Goessche Courant* VI.87 (10 November 1871), 2.

19 F. Domela Nieuwenhuis, 'Eene bijbelagitatie', *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad* 1871-130 (20 July 1871), 1-2; 1878-131 (27 July 1871), 1-2. Already in 1870, an article on the same topic had appeared in the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad*. Mentioned in: A.M. Cramer, 'Wie brengt twist en verdeeldheid in het Ned. Bijbelgenootschap, over de nieuwe Bijbelvertaling?', *Geloof en Vrijheid* IV (1870), 579-592, here 579.

20 C.F.M. Streng, "Joden-kwesties" in Nederland rond 1870. Humaniteit, moderniteit en Nederlanderschap', *Studia Rosenthaliana* XXVIII.2 (1994), 156-176, here 174.

21 'Binnenland', *Algemeen Handelsblad* XLV.12903 (15 november 1872), 2.

M.A.N. Rovers (1834-1898), as well as the modernist-minded lawyer H.Ph. de Kanter (1844-1906).²²

One special edition of the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad* was issued at Christmas in 1871. An unspecified number of copies were given away for free in an attempt to attract new subscribers.²³ In the first article, the pagan origins of Christmas were brought into the limelight.²⁴ In the second article, the life of Jesus the Nazarene was the subject of a “psychological analysis,” resulting in a total demythologisation of the one after whom Christianity was named.²⁵ The third article criticised the custom of celebrating Christmas, as well as Easter and Pentecost, over two public holidays. Since craftsmen and labourers did not get paid on these compulsory free days, they would lose, in the case of the last two aforementioned holidays, one extra day of income, or even two if the 25th and the 26th of December fell on weekdays. The anonymous article writer considered this to be a social abuse: workers, who were already given a mere pittance, could not do without their regular weekly wage. Instead of advocating paid holidays, he argued that Christmas should be celebrated on a Sunday, in order to maintain a six-day working week for artisans. Moreover, he knew for sure, handicraftsmen simply did not know what to do with all this leisure time, which they themselves had not asked for.²⁶

These three articles caught the eye of the freethinker P.A.S. van Limburg Brouwer (1829-1873). In the literary journal *De Nederlandsche Spectator*, he accused modernists of being half-hearted; they rejected the orthodox view of Jesus and simply replaced it with a different image that was just as speculative. Moreover, they were dishonest; the name ‘*Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad*’ suggested that they tried to uphold church interests, whereas they were actually after the dismantlement of the existing church life. Therefore, Van Limburg Brouwer thought that it would be better to rename the magazine ‘*Niet-Kerkelijk Weekblad*’ (‘*Non-Ecclesial Weekly*’). Modernists, he felt, were unbelievers, and should be honest enough to admit that.²⁷ As chapter 5 shows, other free-thinkers flung similar accusations at liberal Protestants.²⁸

22 A series of articles that H.Ph. de Kanter devoted to Dutch Reformed administrative affairs in the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad* in 1872 was reissued in the form of a brochure. See: H.Ph. de Kanter, *Bestuur en beheer* (Groningen [1872]).

23 W.P. Kops, ‘Levensbericht van dr. W.A. Terwogt’, in: *Handelingen en mededeelingen van de Maatschappij der Nederlandsche Letterkunde te Leiden, over het jaar 1909-1910* 11 (Leiden 1910), 91-114, here 98.

24 ‘Kerstmis en Midwinter’, *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad* (Christmas Issue 1871) [undated], 1-2.

25 ‘Jezus van Nazareth. Een zielkundige proeve’, *Ibid.*, 2-3.

26 ‘Drie rustdagen – Ook drie feestdagen?’, *Ibid.*, 3-4.

27 P.A.S. van Limburg Brouwer, ‘Een kerkelijk (?) blad’, *De Nederlandsche Spectator* 1872-01 (6 January 1872), 2-4.

28 Buitenwerf-van der Molen, *God van vooruitgang*, 83.

Orthodox Protestants completely agreed with Van Limburg Brouwer; modernists were nothing more than baptised heathens and hence should accept that they did not belong in any Christian church denomination. Modernists, for their part, blamed confessionalists for making 'outdated' confessions of faith a criterion to decide who should and should not be accepted as church members.²⁹ In their weekly, they verbally abused their antagonists and entered into polemics with the editors of orthodox magazines. Consequently, on 19 April 1872, only eighteen days after its founding, the Kuyperian daily *De Standaard* (*The Standard*) could already make mention of "attacks made on us by the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad*."³⁰ Several months later, G.J. Vos Azn. (1836-1912), the editor-in-chief of the *Kerkelijk Weekblad*, accused the liberal Protestant weekly of being full of "drivel, lies, and ridicule." In response to an article in which an anonymous modernist had mocked the orthodox professor J.I. Doedes (1817-1897) for making a causal connection between praying and sunny weather, Vos severely reprimanded editors Mosselmans and Van Gilse: "Behold, what we have here is an example of modernist humanness, of modernist preachers' respect for holy things on the one hand, and an example of [an orthodox man's] appreciation and veracity on the other hand."³¹

In a footnote to his 1871 lecture *Het Modernisme, een fata morgana op christelijk gebied* (*Modernism, a Fata Morgana in the Christian Sphere*), Kuyper reiterated Van Limburg Brouwer's denunciation of modernism. He called to mind a series of articles that had been published shortly before in the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad*, in which Van Loenen Martinet and Heijse had expressed the hope that modernists would be able to formulate their faith in a less vague way in the near future. Only then would they truly be able to lay the foundations of a stable new religious community.³² Kuyper interpreted this as a covert plea for a modernist confession of faith. The editors of the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad* had consistently denounced him for advocating a strict enforcement of the Three Forms of Unity in the Dutch Reformed Church, but now, finally, the truth came out: they more or less agreed with him that a church could not do without some form of doctrinal unity, written down

29 To name just one example: a certain 'S.' alleged in the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad* in April 1872 that "the masses are no longer susceptible to the doctrines of orthodoxy." Quoted in: [A. Kuyper], 'Amsterdam, 6 April 1872', *De Standaard* 1.6 (8 April 1872), 1.

30 [A. Kuyper], 'Amsterdam, 18 April 1872', *Ibid.* 1.16 (19 April 1872), 1.

31 'Buitenlandsche berichten – Moderne spotternij op de kaak', *Sumatra-courant* XIII.104 (28 December 1872), 3.

32 [J. van Loenen Martinet and J.H.C. Heijse], 'Mededeelingen en berichten – Binnenland', *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad* 1871-130 (20 July 1871), 2.

in a communally endorsed document. Liberal Protestants, he asserted, were not willing to accept the consequences of their own views on church reform.³³

In the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad*, various solutions have been proposed to end the factional quarrels in the Dutch Reformed Church. In an article written by the jurist H. van Loghem (1808-1881), published in the issue of 21 March 1872 (and afterwards as a separate brochure), modernists were given the advice not to strive for an abrupt demolition of existing ecclesial structures, which would result in an irrevocable institutional separation of modernists and orthodox Protestants, but rather to let modernist principles function as a 'leaven' within these structures.³⁴ "This would be," Van Loghem argued, "consistent with the way Jesus has acted: he did not overthrow the Jewish religion all of a sudden; he just scattered seeds that had to germinate in the hearts of his followers; that way, everything outmoded would inevitably go to ruin." Van Loghem did not want "a revolution, but a gradual purge."³⁵ Modernists should have faith in the invincibility of their own principles; if they would punctiliously practice what they preached and patiently try to persuade other-minded fellow church members with arguments instead of coercive measures, victory would be theirs. In the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad* of 25 April 1872, P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr. took a different view. He thought it impossible for modernists and non-modernists to peacefully coexist in one institutional framework. Being convinced that a separation would be the only truly satisfactory solution for both groups to profess their faith as they wished, he is supposed to have said to Dutch Reformed confessionalists in this 1872 article, as the Kuyperian minister J.C. Rullmann (1876-1936) recalled, to leave "[our] Church, which, in your eyes, has been consigned to unbelief."³⁶ These two diametrically opposing opinions reflected, in broad outline, the stances modernists would take towards church reform in the decades to come, with which chapter 4 deals in more detail.

33 A. Kuyper, *Het modernisme, een fata morgana op christelijk gebied* (Amsterdam 1871), 67, note 32.

34 H. van Loghem, *Nieuwe vormen?* (s.l. [1872]). The front-cover of the brochure erroneously spells the author's name as 'H. van Lochem'. The author is Hendrik van Loghem, the former burgomaster of Deventer, as is revealed in: A. van Doorninck, 'Levensbericht van mr. Hendrik van Loghem', in: *Handelingen der algemeene vergadering van de Maatschappij der Nederlandsche Letterkunde te Leiden, gehouden aldaar den 21^{sten} Juni 1883, in het gebouw van de Maatschappij tot Nut van 't Algemeen* III (Leiden 1883), 161-172.

35 Van Loghem, *Nieuwe vormen?*, 7.

36 J.C. Rullmann, *De strijd voor kerkherstel in de Nederlandsch Hervormde Kerk der xix^e eeuw* (Amsterdam 1917), 176.

3 *De Hervorming* (1): Its Position within the Dutch Periodical Press

As stated in the introductory chapter, the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad* was renamed '*De Hervorming*' in 1873. Mosselmans and Van Gilse, who stayed on as editors-in-chief, felt that even though orthodox Protestants were still giving battle to modernists, the latter had already won the war. After all, modernist ideas had taken root in the bosom of the church and were there to stay. While confessionalism still had to be counterattacked, for the spiritual war not to be needlessly prolonged, in essence, "the war is over, which is the assailants' fault."³⁷ The name '*Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad*' was therefore no longer sufficient for a magazine edited in a modernist spirit. Mosselmans and Van Gilse nonetheless kept it as a subtitle, in order to stress that they continued to cherish the church as a 'channel' through which the masses could be "inspired by the holy spirit of dutifulness and fraternal love."³⁸ As previously stated, the new name '*De Hervorming*' gave expression to their hope for a 'new world': "there are so many Dutch people who share our hope. Let our weekly be the centre of their attempts at reform, the place where they can gain strength."³⁹

Consequently, the coverage of the magazine was slightly broadened, although ecclesial affairs continued to predominate. The section containing letters to the editors gradually increased. The annual subscription rate did not change significantly – from 27 February 1873 onwards, subscribers had to pay twenty cents more⁴⁰ –, and neither did the amount of space dedicated to controversies with editors of non-modernist journals. As a matter of fact, the optimism with which Mosselmans and Van Gilse had addressed their readers in the first issue after the magazine's change of name proved to be completely unwarranted. Contrary to their expectation, modernists' presence in church life continued to be vehemently challenged.

Next to the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad* and *De Hervorming*, there were or had been a handful of other periodicals edited in a liberal Protestant spirit. The

37 Mosselmans and Van Gilse referred to the French saying "*Et le combat cessa faute de combattants*," a line in the theatre play *Le Cid* (1636), written by dramatist and poet P. Corneille (1606-1684). It is used when a fight or a discussion comes to an end because several participants have been killed or have not managed to persuade or overrule others, as a result of which the battle of arms or battle of words cannot be continued. See: G. Büchmann (W.H. Robert-tornow et al. eds.), *Geflügelte Worte. Der Zitatenschatz des deutschen Volkes* (Berlin 1920), 278.

38 [B.C.J. Mosselmans and J. van Gilse], 'Nieuwjaarsgroet', *De Hervorming* 1873-01 (2 January 1873), 1-2, here 1.

39 *Ibid.*, 1.

40 'Bericht', *Ibid.* 1873-09 (27 February 1873), 1.

oldest of these was the weekly *De Teeken en des Tijds* (*The Signs of the Times*). Issued as of October 1858, it took a stance against “dead orthodoxy and its daughter, Pharisaic hypocrisy,” as well as against “shallow, vain, worldly liberalism [. . .] and its two daughters, indifference and mockery.” The weekly was based on the conviction that all church factions “only possessed parts of the [religious] truth or only shed light on this truth from one side.” Consequently, it “did not originate from any faction and was not intended for one particular party.”⁴¹ This proclamation of neutrality could, however, not conceal the fact that the magazine unmistakably propagated ideas and beliefs that soon came to be labelled ‘modernist’. The editor-in-chief Tiele and his fellow article writers, such as Busken Huet, A. Pierson (1831-1896), Kuenen, and Rauwenhoff, were dedicated followers of Scholten and Opzoomer, as was known at the time.⁴² Moreover, the topics dealt with in *De Teeken en des Tijds* – liberalism,⁴³ tolerance,⁴⁴ and biblical criticism⁴⁵ – all indicated that the weekly was filled with modernist preoccupations. The magazine was slightly ahead of its time; after all, in the late 1850s the modernist movement was just beginning to take shape. It accordingly ceased to exist, due to a lack of interest, in late 1859.⁴⁶

Another modernist periodical, *De Nieuwe Richting in het Leven* (*The New Direction in Life*), had been founded in 1868. “People long for a new outlook on religious life that meets today’s needs,” the editor-in-chief A.S. Carpentier Alting explained in its first issue. “The modernist movement fulfils this need. It tries to shape religion and Christianity in such a way that they no longer conflict with the results of serious scientific research.”⁴⁷ The founders of this magazine were also involved with the creation of the meeting of modernist preachers in the northern provinces.⁴⁸ Their main objective was “to explain

41 [C.P. Tiele], ‘De redactie aan den lezer’, *De Teeken en des Tijds* 1.1 (1 October 1858), 1-2, here 1.

42 Busken Huet, for example, had already published his *Brieven over den Bijbel*. In addition, it was, at the time, “generally known that Tiele has rejected the divinity of Christ.” See: Een zoekende naar waarheid, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *De Dageraad* VIII (1859), 472-473, here 472.

43 J.H. Maronier, ‘Willem de Zwijger, een voorbeeld van echte liberaliteit’, *De Teeken en des Tijds* 1.52 (23 September 1859), 2.

44 J.H. Gunning, Jr., ‘Opmerkingen over verdraagzaamheid’, *Ibid.* 1.27 (1 April 1859), 1-2.

45 C.P. Tiele, ‘Brieven over den Bijbel’, *Ibid.* 1.30 (22 April 1859), 1-2; 1.31 (29 April 1859), 1-2; 1.32 (6 May 1859), 1-2; 1.36 (3 June 1859), 1-2; 1.37 (10 June 1859), 1-2.

46 [C.P. Tiele], ‘Overzicht’, *Ibid.* 1.52 (23 September 1859), 1.

47 A.S. Carpentier Alting, ‘Aan onze lezers bij ’t begin van den tweeden jaargang’, *De Nieuwe Richting in het Leven* 11 (1869), 1-4, here 4.

48 J.J. Kalma, J.J. Spahr van der Hoek and K. de Vries, *Geschiedenis van Friesland* (Drachten 1968), 552.

the modernist principles in plain language to the faithful flock [...], to stimulate non-dogmatic piety, to jolt awake the indifferent, and to bring wandering souls back on the straight and narrow path."⁴⁹ *De Nieuwe Richting in het Leven* targeted modernists in the province of Friesland and became defunct due to publishing issues at the end of 1871.⁵⁰

Whereas *De Nieuwe Richting in het Leven* published articles written for churchgoers, and *De Teeken en des Tijds* tried to reach out to both theologians and 'interested laymen', the modernist-oriented *Theologisch Tijdschrift* (*Theological Magazine*) specifically targeted doctors and professors of theology. This bimonthly, edited by Hoekstra, Kuenen, Rauwenhoff, Tiele, Loman, and the Reformed theologian F.W.B. van Bell (1822-1896), was issued starting in 1867 to offer Dutch modernist theologians the possibility of sharing scholarly findings and thoughts with their peers. All contributions had to be based on research conducted by the authors themselves.⁵¹ The magazine, issued until 1919, did not want to popularise modernist opinions and only discussed affairs related to the professional guild of theologians. From 1862 onwards, the Remonstrant minister J.H. Maronier (1827-1920) published a periodical that targeted both modern theologians and the modernist-minded bourgeoisie. In his *Bibliotheek van Moderne Theologie* – renamed '*Bibliotheek van Moderne Theologie en Letterkunde*' ('*Library of Modern Theology and Literature*') in 1869⁵² –, Maronier anthologised theological treatises and literary texts of mostly non-Dutch authors.⁵³ After Maronier resigned his position as editor-in-chief in July 1880, M.A.N. Rovers, who was no longer a Dutch Reformed minister at the time, continued to publish the *Bibliotheek* until 1893. Due to, as Rovers perceived things, a dwindling interest in theology among laypeople, the *Bibliotheek* only managed to reach theologians in the last couple of years, causing its readership to become similar to that of the *Theologisch Tijdschrift*. As such, it had lost its reason to exist.⁵⁴

A magazine with a similar focus on modernist theology, the first one of its kind in the Netherlands, was the French-language periodical *La Seule Chose*

49 A.S. Carpentier Alting, *Mnemosyne* (Leiden 1888), 76.

50 Busé, 'Het modernisme in Friesland omstreeks 1870', 87.

51 As was made clear in: 'Varia', *Theologisch Tijdschrift* 1 (1867), 281.

52 'Varia', *Ibid.* III (1869), 674.

53 J.H. Maronier, 'Voorberigt', *Bibliotheek van Moderne Theologie* I (1862), I-II. See also: 'Advertentiën', *De Nederlandsche Spectator* 1862-06 (8 February 1862), 48.

54 M.A.N. Rovers, 'Leestafel', *Bibliotheek van Moderne Theologie en Letterkunde* XIII (second series) (1893), 641-650, here 649-650; J. van Loenen Martinet, 'Levensbericht van dr. M.A.N. Rovers', in: *Handelingen en mededeelingen van de Maatschappij der Nederlandsche Letterkunde te Leiden, over het jaar 1901-1902* III (Leiden 1902), 235-257, here 250-251.

Nécessaire (*The Only Thing Necessary*). Edited by Busken Huet and filled with articles written by other renowned Francophone theologians such as E.H.A. Schérer (1815-1889), A.J. Coquerel, Jr. (1820-1875), and T. Colani (1824-1888), this “monthly for Christian edification,” issued as of April 1857, wanted to be a foil to the “Gospel’s scriptural, pristine, and ageless character.”⁵⁵ According to Busken Huet and his colleagues, the spirit of confessionalism that was still actively present in the churches had led, on the rebound, to “religious indifference.” This indifference had had, in turn, the consequence that “the Gospel was misunderstood, ignored, pushed aside into a corner, [only] respected as an artefact of bygone times.”⁵⁶ The present day resembled the situation of the Israelites during the apostolic era, though ‘a beneficial reversal’ was beginning to break through. Instead of contenting themselves with a veiled version of the Truth, people yearned for the ‘undefiled’ Glad Tidings of Jesus. Speaking about the results of contemporary biblical criticism in guarded terms, Busken Huet stated that non-theologians should not be kept in the dark about these results: “in our days, it is, more than ever, necessary to be honest.”⁵⁷ He showed an openness about his own religious convictions as well, by informing his readers what the name ‘Jesus Christ’ meant to him. Using typically modernist phraseology, he declared that, in his view, “the name ‘Jesus Christ’ is the proper name for our better selves.”⁵⁸ Because it was written in French, *La Seule Chose Nécessaire* only circulated among members of the Walloon Reformed churches and Dutchmen who were able to read French⁵⁹ – two partly overlapping groups that both belonged, on the whole, to the higher strata of Dutch society.⁶⁰ Its

55 C. Busken Huet, ‘À nos lecteurs’, *La Seule Chose Nécessaire. Recueil mensuel d’édification chrétienne* 1 (1856), 1-4, here 2.

56 *Ibid.*, 2-3.

57 *Ibid.*, 4.

58 C. Busken Huet, ‘À nos lecteurs’, *La Seule Chose Nécessaire. Recueil de méditations chrétiennes* (1857), 1-4, here 3. This is a different publication than *La Seule Chose nécessaire. Recueil mensuel d’édification chrétienne* – in fact, *La Seule Chose Nécessaire. Recueil de méditations chrétiennes* was a reprint of the first four issues of *La Seule Chose Nécessaire. Recueil mensuel d’édification chrétienne*, supplemented with a new preface by Busken Huet. See also: C.G.N. de Vooy, *Conrad Busken Huet* (The Hague and Antwerp 1949), 21. Whereas De Vooy accentuates the progressiveness of Busken Huet and his magazine, Trapman emphasises that *La Seule Chose Nécessaire* also contained rather orthodox statements, for example on the veracity of Jesus’s physical resurrection. See: J. Trapman, *Het land van Erasmus* (Amsterdam 1999), 175.

59 C.G.N. de Vooy, *Geschiedenis van de letterkunde der Nederlanden* VII (’s-Hertogenbosch and Brussels 1948), 277.

60 E.g.: B.M.A. de Vries, *Electoraat en elite. Sociale structuur en sociale mobiliteit in Amsterdam, 1850-1895* (Amsterdam 1986), 54.

potential reading public was therefore limited, which was probably the reason why the publication of the magazine had to be cancelled in March 1858. However, Busken Huet had targeted a much larger audience. As stated by A.C. Kruseman in his study on the mid-nineteenth-century Dutch book business, Busken Huet had initially hoped that *La Seule Chose Nécessaire* would expand to become the pivotal journalistic platform of modernism throughout Europe. "Obviously," Kruseman commented, "this quixotic endeavour" was doomed to fail from the start.⁶¹

Even though the articles it contained were rather learned, O.J. Praamstra lists *La Seule Chose Nécessaire* among the so-called 'edifying journals'.⁶² This magazine genre consisted of periodicals that, contrary to opinion magazines and academic-theological journals, tried to reach members of the lower and lower middle classes, in an attempt to increase their devotion as well as their knowledge of the Bible. Such periodicals mainly consisted of biblical and non-biblical parables, (semi-)fictionalised stories with an obvious didactic intent and religious moral, and meditations written in a popular, easily accessible style. The first edifying magazines of a markedly modernist persuasion appeared in the 1860s. The oldest of these was *De Bijbelvriend* (*The Bible's Friend*), which had been created in 1856 and was edited by the Reformed minister A.L. Poelman (1827-1893). Together with the *Godsdienstig Huisblad* (*Religious Household Magazine*), which was founded in the same year and was meant for "everyone who was interested in acquiring a proper understanding of the Bible, and who wanted to increase and enlighten his knowledge as a Christian by taking cognizance of the history of the Christian church,"⁶³ this monthly was originally rooted in the Groningen movement. However, *De Bijbelvriend* had soon developed into a medium through which modernist ideas were spread. After publicly declaring himself to be a modernist, Poelman, who was assisted by U.P. Okken (1820-1900) from 1857 until 1859 and afterwards by J. Hooykaas Herderscheê, used *De Bijbelvriend* to popularise a historical-critical interpretation of Old and New Testament stories.⁶⁴ All non-modernists

61 A.C. Kruseman, *Bouwstoffen voor een geschiedenis van den Nederlandschen boekhandel, gedurende de halve eeuw 1830-1880* I.2 (Amsterdam 1887), 407.

62 O.J. Praamstra, 'Stichtelijke lectuur. Een analyse van het vroege kritische werk van Conrad Busken Huet (1855-1859)', *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandse Taal- en Letterkunde* CII (1986), 21-54, here 23, note 12.

63 'Advertentiën', *Groninger Courant* CXIV.157 (28 December 1855), 4.

64 Buitenwerf-van der Molen, *God van vooruitgang*, 62-63. Buitenwerf-van der Molen and Bos are wrong to imply that *De Bijbelvriend* had been a modernist periodical from the very beginning. See: *Ibid.*; D.J. Bos, "When Creed and Morals Rot. . ." Orthodoxies versus

who were involved with the magazine, for example the Groningen theologians Hofstede de Groot and U.P. Goudschaal (1809-1889), withdrew as contributors and were replaced by such pronounced modernists as T. Modderman Az. (1818-1879) and Kuenen.⁶⁵ The subtitle '*Nieuw en Oud*' ('*New and Old*') became the new name of the magazine in 1866⁶⁶ – a name change with which Poelman and Hooykaas Herderscheê indicated that it would no longer exclusively deal with biblical exegesis, but also with questions regarding “the relation of the modernist principles to education, missionary activities, politics, science, art, and society.”⁶⁷ The topics mentioned here resemble the themes to which the articles in *De Hervorming* would pay attention to a large extent.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, Dutch modernism, and Dutch Protestantism in general, produced a substantial amount of edifying periodicals. It was no coincidence that this “torrent,” as one contemporary observer phrased it, took place at this specific moment in time.⁶⁸ Of course, in the Netherlands, the abolition of the newspaper tax in 1869 was a major stimulus for the founding of all kinds of dailies, weeklies, fortnightlies, (bi)monthlies, and quarterlies. In the case of *edifying* journals, there were some additional factors involved as well. In the first place, the growth in edifying literature could be seen as the result of a general trend in nineteenth-century church life. During the entire nineteenth century, attempts were made to increase the involvement of the laity in religious affairs and to intensify the zeal for their faith.⁶⁹

Liberalism in the Nineteenth-Century Netherlands Reformed Church, in: B.E.J.H. Becking (ed.), *Orthodoxy, Liberalism, and Adaptation. Essays on Ways of Worldmaking in Times of Change from Biblical, Historical and Systematic Perspectives* (Leiden and Boston 2011), 115-147, here 136.

65 'De Bijbelvriend', in: G. Harinck et al. (eds.), *BNPP* II (Amstelveen 2006), 47.

66 The magazine was called '*De Bijbelvriend. Maandelijksch tijdschrift tot bevordering van regte bijbelkennis*' ('*The Friend of the Bible. Monthly for the Advancement of Proper Biblical Knowledge*') between 1856 and 1859, and '*De Bijbelvriend. Nieuw en oud, ter verklaring van den inhoud en den geest des Bijbels*' ('*The Friend of the Bible. New and Old, in Explanation of the Bible's Content and Spirit*') between 1860 and 1866. See: x., 'Godgeleerdheid, Wijsbegeerte, Staatskunde, Opvoeding en Onderwijs – Hand. xvii:11', *De Tijdspiegel* xvii.2 (1860), 19-20, here 20; 'De Bijbelvriend', 47.

67 R-t., 'Bibliographisch album – “De Bijbelvriend” en “Nieuw en Oud”', *Het Leeskabinet* xxxiv (1867), 41-42, here 41.

68 J.F., Jr., 'Boekbeoordeelingen, boekbeschouwingen, boekaankondigingen – “De Bijbelvriend”', *De Nieuwe Recensent* 1 (1858), 177-178, here 177. Other observers used the more neutral word “abundance.” See: 'Boekaankondiging – “Godsdienstige overdenkingen”', *Waarheid in Liefde* xxxi.3 (1868), 510; P., 'Bibliographisch album – “Vrouwelijke godsvrucht”', *Het Leeskabinet* xxii (1855), 116-117, here 117.

69 In the Dutch context, the enfranchisement of all male members of the Dutch Reformed in 1867 is probably one of the clearest examples of these attempts.

In the second place, edifying magazines were, particularly in the context of the fragmented Dutch church landscape, a means to involve non-theologically trained laymen in theological questions of the day and to spread certain theological concepts among them. In order to make these ideas comprehensible to as large a public as possible, edifying magazines couched them in the form of stories.⁷⁰ The emergence of the modernist movement stimulated the founding of such journals.⁷¹

Moreover, edifying magazines were apologetic in nature. They tried to impress their readership with the message that a good, righteous citizen had to be, first and foremost, a virtuous Christian. By publishing such periodicals, modernists sought to counter the allegation that their popularisation of historical-critical biblical scholarship was faith-destructing instead of faith-enhancing. In their eyes, it was exactly the other way round. *De Bijbelvriend*, *Nieuw en Oud*, and other modernist edifying journals such as *Geloof en Leven* (*Faith and Life*), a monthly founded in 1867 and filled with "contributions for the promotion of religious popular education,"⁷² *Taal des Geloofs* (*Language of Faith*), which appeared on a monthly basis as of 1867 and contained 'religious lectures' held by modernist ministers,⁷³ and the *Godsdienstig Album* (*Religious Album*), a monthly created in 1871 to anthologise Dutch and foreign edifying literature,⁷⁴ were consequently not intended to deprive people of their faith, but on the contrary to strengthen the defensibility of their faith. The historian of Christianity E.G.E. van der Wall therefore states that "[their] motive was apologetic in character, as has been widely neglected in studies and views

70 The literary studies scholar M. McCartin Wearn suggests a correlation between the growth in edifying literature in the nineteenth century and the simultaneous 'feminisation of religion.' The latter is a label given in historiography to the emergence of a new kind of 'sentimental' piety, as well as to the emerging numerical preponderance of women over men in church life. In the Netherlands, here were edifying magazines that specifically targeted women, but modernist magazines were not among them. See: M. McCartin Wearn, 'Introduction', in: M. McCartin Wearn (ed.), *Nineteenth-Century American Women Write Religion. Lived Theologies and Literature* (London and New York [2014] 2016), 1-14, here 9; L.E. Jensen, "Bij uitsluiting voor de vrouwelijke sekse geschikt". *Vrouwentijdschriften en journalistes in Nederland in de achttiende en negentiende eeuw* (Hilversum 2001), 141-142, 161-174.

71 Praamstra, 'Stichtelijke lectuur', 31-34; Kruseman, *Bouwstoffen voor een geschiedenis van den Nederlandschen boekhandel* 1.1, 205-206.

72 [J. van der Ven and H. Vrendenberg Cz.], 'Geloof en Leven', *Geloof en Leven* 1.1 (1867), 1-5; W.C. van Manen, *Het Nieuwe Testament sedert 1859* (Groningen 1886), 7.

73 Its first issue was: T. Modderman Az., 'De blijdschap des geloofs', *Taal des Geloofs* 1 (1867), 3-18.

74 'Advertentiën', *Het Nieuws van den Dag* 1870-238 (20 December 1870), 4.

on this movement.”⁷⁵ Modernists feared that Christianity would not be strong enough to bear up against the challenges imposed upon it by modern science, modern philosophy, and modern textual criticism. Since the Christian religion on the one hand and civilisation, decency, and morality on the other were generally seen as two sides of the same coin, this was an alarming prospect, even for more ‘enlightened’ nineteenth-century men. To turn the tide, the Christian faith had to be adapted to contemporary circumstances.⁷⁶ Modernists were therefore convinced that *true* edification could only be based on modernist principles.⁷⁷ In line with this claim, edifying magazines were ‘tools’ by which they could show laymen how the essence of Christianity could be preserved and how the outcomes of modern scholarship could be accepted at the same time.

Popular education was also the objective to which the *Volksblad* (*People’s Magazine*), first issued in 1856, devoted itself.⁷⁸ Its editor-in-chief, the conservative-liberal Lutheran parliamentarian J. de Bosch Kemper (1808-1876), primarily used the *Volksblad* to vent his gall on the then leading liberal statesman J.R. Thorbecke (1798-1872), who, in his eyes, threw away the principles of true liberalism by advocating a strong central government at the expense of municipal authorities.⁷⁹ Under the heading ‘*Tijdvragen*’ (‘Questions of the Day’), he wrote short essays on political and societal issues. As of 1869, several of these treatises were published as articles in a new journal, itself called ‘*Tijdvragen*’.⁸⁰ Although the *Volksblad* and the *Tijdvragen* were neither religious publications in the strict sense of the word, nor directly linked to the modernist movement, De Bosch Kemper himself ranked them among the magazines that sympathised with this movement.⁸¹ From 1859 onwards, when the *Volksblad*’s coverage had been broadened to the field of religion, it was the only Dutch weekly that “followed with interest the new religious movement and quickly espoused its principle of Truth-loving [bib-

75 As stated in: B.E.J.H. Becking, ‘Introduction – Why This Volume’, in: Becking (ed.), *Orthodoxy, Liberalism, and Adaptation*, 3-7, here 5.

76 E.G.E. van der Wall, ‘Believing, Belonging, and Adapting. The Case of Religious Modernism’, in: *Ibid.*, 91-114, here 106-109.

77 C. Busken Huet, *Stichtelijke lektuur* (Haarlem 1859), 283.

78 T.J. Boschloo, *De productiemaatschappij. Liberalisme, economische wetenschap en het vraagstuk der armoede in Nederland, 1800-1875* (Hilversum 1989), 97.

79 *Ibid.*, 93, 97.

80 The first issue appeared in July-August 1869. Mentioned in: *Lijst van Boekwerken 1869-11* (November 1869), 109.

81 See also: A. Réville, ‘Dutch Theology. Its Past and Present State’, *The Theological Review* 1.3 (1864), 255-293, here 291.

lical and religious] criticism."⁸² Because, in the meantime, other magazines edited in a modernist spirit had appeared, one of the main reasons for De Bosch Kemper to publish the *Volksblad* and the *Tijdvragen* no longer existed. He therefore decided to discontinue the issuing of both periodicals in 1872.⁸³

Before informing his readership about his decision, De Bosch Kemper must have given J.H. Maronier a hint about his intention. After all, during the first general assembly of the NPB, Maronier suggested the possibility of buying the *Volksblad* from De Bosch Kemper and turning it into the official newsletter of the NPB. The printed report of the meeting does not make mention of Maronier's proposal, but several dailies do.⁸⁴ The general assembly rejected the suggestion. Only three days later, on 3 November 1871, De Bosch Kemper publicly announced that he would cease publication of his magazines as of 1872,⁸⁵ which conveys the impression that he had awaited the response of the general NPB assembly to Maronier's proposal.

After 1871, the lack of an NPB-related magazine grew more acute. In May 1874, during a meeting of the executive board of the NPB, the secretary A.G. van Hamel addressed the issue. He envisioned a journal that would be issued once every two weeks, in imitation of the Swiss modernist fortnightly *Die Reform* (*The Reformation*), founded in 1872.⁸⁶ Its first article, in which the editor-in-chief H. Lang (1826-1876) gave notice of his intentions, strongly resembled the declaration of intent, referred to in the introductory chapter, that would be published in the opening issue of *De Hervorming* a year later. In order to preserve the church as the disseminator of true religion, Lang insisted that the existing church ambit had to be delivered from the "united reactionary alliance [of] ultramontane Catholicism and Bible-believing Reformed orthodoxy," and that it should be reformed in accordance with the "advancing powers of progress. [...] Everything that a modern, reasonable man can no longer believe,

82 J. de Bosch Kemper, 'Aan de lezers en medewerkers van de "Tijdvragen"', *Tijdvragen* 111 (1872), I-VI, here II. The articles were written in 1871, but the volume itself was published a year later.

83 *Ibid.*, III.

84 E.g.: 'Berichten in de laatste editie van het vorig nommer opgenomen', *Algemeen Handelsblad* XLIV-12532 (3 November 1871), 3; 'Kerk- en schoolnieuws', *Het Nieuws van den Dag* 1871-507 (3 November 1871), 2; 'Binnenland', *Provinciale Drentsche en Asser Courant* XLVIII.259 (3 November 1871), 2.

85 The article 'Aan de lezers en medewerkers van de "Tijdvragen"' was dated 3 November 1871.

86 Van Driel, "De Hervorming", 136.

sing or pray, should be eradicated from the church, from preaching to hymnal singing to praying!"⁸⁷

Since Mosselmans and Van Gilse had a similar objective with *De Hervorming* as Lang had with *Die Reform*, Van Hamel suggested that the NPB purchase *De Hervorming*. His fellow board members approved the idea, but Mosselmans and Van Gilse were less enthusiastic: when Van Hamel's proposal came to be discussed at the 1874 NPB meeting, the two spoke of their fears about board involvement with the journal's editorial policy.⁸⁸ Nonetheless, negotiations with E.J.P. Jorissen (1829-1912), the owner of the Erven B. van der Kamp publishing house, about a purchase of *De Hervorming* continued. Although not credited as one of the editors of the magazine, Jorissen in fact fulfilled that same role as did Mosselmans, whose editorship ended at the end of 1874, and Van Gilse.⁸⁹ The negotiations he had with the NPB board did not go well, even reaching a deadlock in the course of 1875.

Yet all of a sudden, Jorissen proved to be very eager to sell *De Hervorming* in September of that same year. Shortly before, Th.F. Burgers (1834-1881), the then president of the Transvaal Republic who shared Jorissen's liberal Protestant worldview, had asked him to accept a position as a classical language teacher at a grammar school in Pretoria. Jorissen wanted to accept and therefore had to sell the Groningen publishing house at short notice. He made the NPB board the offer to sell the name and format of *De Hervorming* for f 1,000.-, to take effect on 11 November 1875. The board had to make a decision before 1 October, when the publishing house would pass into the hands of its new owners.⁹⁰ It could not formally take such a decision without being granted full discretionary powers by the general NPB assembly to do so, but the assembly would only convene at the end of October. The board members thought that the assembly would approve Jorissen's offer anyway and hence decided to accept it. Their calculation proved to be right: the general assembly did indeed sanction the deal.⁹¹ However, had the general assembly known about it *in advance*, it would more than likely have declined the offer.⁹² Several participants

87 Quoted in: A. Lindt, *Protestanten – Katholiken: Kulturkampf. Studien zur Kirchen- und Geistesgeschichte des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts* (Zürich [1963]), 141.

88 [B.C.J. Mosselmans and J. van Gilse in:] *Verslag NPB 1875*, 23.

89 Mosselmans's articles were deemed "too insensitive." See: F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr., 'Een woord vooraf', *De Hervorming* 1876-45 (9 November 1876), 1-2, here 1; J. van Gilse, 'Afscheidswoord', *Ibid.* 1875-44 (4 November 1875), 1.

90 H. van der Laan, *Het Groninger boekbedrijf. Drukkers, uitgevers en boekhandelaren in Groningen tot het eind van de negentiende eeuw* (Assen 2005), 195.

91 *Verslag NPB 1875*, 23.

92 Van Driel, "De Hervorming", 139.

of the assembly are known to have been anything but pleased with the "*fait accompli*" with which they were presented.⁹³

As a result of the purchase, the issue of *De Hervorming* of 11 November 1875 was the first to carry the subtitle '*Orgaan van het Nederlandsche Protestantenvond*' ('Mouthpiece of the Dutch League of Protestants') and the first to be edited by the Lutheran minister H.C. Lohr. As of January 1876, Van Hengel & Eeltjes in Rotterdam became the new publishing house for the magazine.⁹⁴ Simultaneously, the annual subscription rate was lowered from f 4.80 to f 4.26,⁹⁵ more than likely in an attempt to stimulate as many NPB members as possible to take a subscription.

4 *De Hervorming* (11): From 1875 to 1934

The first year of *De Hervorming* under the flag of the NPB proved to be a difficult one. First, the general NPB board soon felt that it had bought a 'pig in a poke'. It thought it had purchased a magazine with approximately 500 subscribers, but it turned out that only 338 people had a subscription to *De Hervorming*. After a lengthy correspondence, Jorissen, now living in South Africa, ultimately agreed that the board only had to pay him f 676.- instead of f 1,000.-.⁹⁶ The fact that the number of subscribers was significantly lower than expected probably caused the annual subscription fee to be raised to f 4.46 as of 27 April 1876.⁹⁷ Second, the board members of the NPB were not pleased with Lohr as the editor-in-chief. In his first lead article, Lohr stated

93 *Verslag NPB* 1875, 21-23. Jorissen would never become a teacher in Pretoria; instead, he was appointed as the state solicitor of the Transvaal Republic in 1876. See: 'Jorissen (Eduard Johan Pieter)', in: *BWPGN* IV (The Hague 1931), 591-593, here 592. See also: H.J. van Rinsum, *Sol Iustitiae en de Kaap. Een geschiedenis van de banden van de Utrechtse Universiteit met Zuid-Afrika* (Hilversum 2006), 83-84.

94 As was the case when Mosselmans and Van Gilse had become the editors of the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad*, the magazine's publishing house and editorial board were now once again located in the same city: both Lohr and Van Hengel & Eeltjes resided in Rotterdam. Van der Laan is wrong in suggesting that the Erven B. van der Kamp would continue to publish *De Hervorming* until the magazine became defunct at the end of 1934. See: Van der Laan, *Het Groninger boekbedrijf*, 118.

95 *De Hervorming* 1876-01 (6 January 1876). During the 1875 general assembly, the NPB executive board had proposed a rate of f 4.-. See: *Verslag AV* 1875, 21. The publishing house Van Hengel & Eeltjes was apparently not able to issue *De Hervorming* for a price as low as that.

96 Van Driel, "De Hervorming", 139.

97 *De Hervorming* 1876-17 (27 April 1876).

that he wanted to pursue the editorial policy of his predecessors: counterattacking confessionalism on the one hand, and materialism, the denial of religious life, on the other; legitimising the presence of modernists in church life, especially in the Dutch Reformed Church; discussing how the antagonism between modernists and orthodox could best be resolved; and trying to foster a spirit of cooperation among liberal Protestants.⁹⁸ However, he fell short of expectations. In the eyes of the board members, Lohr did not engage himself enough in polemics with modernists' fiercest opponents. H.C.J. Krijthe (1825-1902), an NPB member with freethinking sympathies, was critical as well, albeit for the opposite reason. According to him, *De Hervorming* was still preoccupied with the demolition of the old, dogmatic orthodox Christian outlook on life. The magazine did not positively contribute to the build-up of a genuinely *new* kind of Christianity, as it wasted too many words on orthodox antagonism and contained too many articles on theological matters that were hard to grasp for laymen.⁹⁹ During the 1876 general NPB assembly, Krijthe therefore suggested turning *De Hervorming* into a "popular magazine."¹⁰⁰ He met with rebuff, although his criticism, together with that of the board, did prompt Lohr to resign shortly after the assembly. As of 9 November 1876, F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr. (1839-1900), at the time a Dutch Reformed minister in the North Holland town of Santpoort, succeeded Lohr.

In the first two issues after Lohr's resignation, Hugenholtz promised to make more counterattacks against anti-modernist journalists than Lohr had done and asked the NPB branches to send in more news reports than they had done so far. Although the aforementioned *Vereeniging tot handhaving en voortplanting van het liberale beginsel* in Amsterdam had been issuing a weekly called '*De Vrijheid*' ('Freedom') since 1873, *De Hervorming* was still the only modernist opinion magazine with both a national focus and a national circulation. Hugenholtz therefore agreed with Krijthe that the magazine should be written in such a way that it would attract as large a readership as possible.¹⁰¹ Judging by the number of subscribers, Hugenholtz' editorship was successful: in a period of only twelve months, the number of subscriptions increased from nearly 350 to approximately 600.¹⁰² Yet Hugenholtz himself was not en-

98 [H.C. Lohr], 'Een woord vooraf', *De Hervorming* 1875-45 (11 November 1875), 1-2.

99 [H.C.J. Krijthe in:] F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr., 'Nog iets over ons blad', *Ibid.* 1876-46 (16 November 1876), 1.

100 [H.C.J. Krijthe in:] *Verslag NPB* 1876, 27.

101 F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr., 'Een woord vooraf', *De Hervorming* 1876-45 (9 November 1876), 1-2; [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'Nog iets over ons blad', *Ibid.* 1876-46 (16 November 1876), 1.

102 [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'Zevende gewone algemeene vergadering van het Ned. Protestantenbond', *Ibid.* 1877-44 (3 November 1877), 3.

tirely satisfied. Contrary to his intentions, most articles were still devoted to administrative church affairs.¹⁰³ He was trying to free *De Hervorming* of its image of being a periodical that was merely of interest to ministers and theologians,¹⁰⁴ but the ongoing quarrels within the Dutch Reformed Church, which were quite severe in the late 1870s, hindered him from doing so effectively.¹⁰⁵

As of January 1877, J.F.V. Behrns in Amsterdam became the new publisher of *De Hervorming*. Once again, the instalment of a new editor-in-chief, in this case Hugenholtz, led to a switch to a publishing house in the vicinity of the new editor-in-chief's residence. The subscription rate was simultaneously raised to the earlier sum of f 4.80.¹⁰⁶ In addition, the weekly was no longer issued on Thursday, but on Friday evenings. Issues of the magazine were, however, given the date of the Saturday following the Friday on which they were published. This was not exceptional: the Kuyperian weekly *De Heraut*, for instance, was issued on Fridays, but bore the date of the next Sunday.

In February 1878, a new modernist magazine entered the scene: the *Stemmen uit de Vrije Gemeente* (*Voices from the Free Congregation*), issued by the *Vrije Gemeente* (Free Congregation) in Amsterdam.¹⁰⁷ Chapter 4 deals with the Free Congregation in more detail. F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr., a half-brother of the two founders of this nondenominational modernist faith community, regularly published reviews of issues of the *Stemmen* in *De Hervorming* and sympathised with its editors' ecclesial ideal of free congregations cut loose from any denominational structure.¹⁰⁸

After a couple of years, the content of *De Hervorming* started to change. From 1880 onwards, Hugenholtz began to devote more and more attention to non-ecclesial affairs and topics. One important event that must have influenced this shift was the decision of the Dutch Reformed synod in that year to stipulate that new church members merely had to agree with church doctrines "in spirit and substance."¹⁰⁹ Although this could be seen as an endorsement of doctrinal freedom, modernists had rather hoped that the synod would allow

103 [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'Iets over ons blad en de behoeften waaraan het te voldoen heeft', *De Hervorming* 1878-02 (12 January 1878), 1.

104 *Ibid.*; [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'De achtste gewone algemeene vergadering van het Nederlandsch Protestantenvond', *Ibid.* 1878-44 (2 November 1878), 2-3, here 3; [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'Rectificatie', *Ibid.* 1881-01 (8 January 1881), 1-2, here 1.

105 He admitted this in: [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'Binnenland – Nieuwjaar', *Ibid.* 1882-01 (7 January 1882), 3.

106 *Ibid.* 1877-01 (6 January 1877).

107 P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., 'Een woord vooraf', *Stemmen uit de Vrije Gemeente* 1 (1878), 5-8.

108 Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III, 45.

109 *Ibid.*, 42.

ministers to ask questions in accordance with their own theological views, or else to ask no questions at all. After all, even after the acceptance of the “in spirit and substance” clause in 1880, modernist clergymen still had to refer to the dogmatic documents on which the Dutch Reformed Church was formally based.¹¹⁰ Moreover, a pragmatic settlement that could have ended the antagonism between modernists and non-modernists remained elusive.¹¹¹ Within the modernist movement, the synodal resolutions created an atmosphere of disappointment and led, with regard to church affairs, to a state of apathy.¹¹²

A second motive for devoting more attention to social affairs had to do with a change in production. Attempting to expand the readership of *De Hervorming*, Hugenholtz insisted on the publication of a separate Sunday paper, which would contain edifying readings and plainly written articles.¹¹³ Such a ‘popular magazine’ did not (yet) come into being, but instead scholarly, theological articles were issued in a separate, small-sized booklet, the *Bijblad van De Hervorming* (*Supplement to The Reformation*), as of mid-1880. This journal, for which an additional subscription was required, would continue to appear until 1897. An annual volume of the *Bijblad* consisted of four to eleven numbers and contained eighty to one hundred and seventy-six pages. With the most inaccessible theological pieces of writing now transferred to the *Bijblad*, Hugenholtz was able to dedicate more space to topics other than church affairs.

A third and last stimulus for broadening the coverage of *De Hervorming* was a process of reorientation within the NPB, dealt with in detail at the beginning of chapter 7. Here it is sufficient to note that, starting in 1879, prominent modernists urged the NPB to shift its focus from church life to society. H.Ph. de Kanter was one of them. Referring to the aim of the NPB to enhance a free

110 E.J.W. Koch, ‘Nog een woord over de aanneming tot lidmaat der gemeente als besluit van het voorafgaand catechetisch onderwijs’, *De Hervorming* 1880-14 (3 April 1880), 54-55, here 55; [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘Kerkelijke kwestie – De synodale besluiten’, *Ibid.* 1880-22 (29 May 1880), 86-87.

111 F. Pijper, ‘Levensbericht van Johannes Gerhardus Rijk Acquoy’, in: *Handelingen en mededeelingen van de Maatschappij der Nederlandsche Letterkunde te Leiden, over het jaar 1897-1898* III (Leiden 1898), 290-331, here 309-310.

112 E.g.: [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘Vraagbus’, *De Hervorming* 1885-05 (31 January 1885), 20.

113 Van Driel, “De Hervorming”, 141; [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘Tets over ons blad en de behoeften waaraan het te voldoen heeft’, *De Hervorming* 1878-02 (12 January 1878), 1; [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘De achtste gewone algemeene vergadering van het Nederlandsch Protestantenvond’, *Ibid.* 1878-44 (2 November 1878), 2-3, here 3; [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘Negende algemeene vergadering van den Nederlandschen Protestantenvond’, *Ibid.* 1879-45 (8 November 1879), 177-178, here 177.

development of religious life, he stated in early 1880 that he was "unable to understand how the NPB wants to achieve this [aim] without involving itself in the major social issues of the present, which directly relate to its aim."¹¹⁴ De Kanter and others argued that there were not only wrongs in the churches that hindered religious life from developing freely, but also, and to an even greater extent, wrongs in society. By writing more extensively on social issues, Hugenholtz responded to this sentiment.

Hugenholtz hoped that *De Hervorming* could now finally lose its image of being a 'ministers' magazine' that it had inherited from the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad*. This hope did not entirely come true, as the complaint that the magazine was only relevant to theologians would still be made against *De Hervorming* even decades after Hugenholtz's resignation.¹¹⁵ Moreover, by paying more attention to non-ecclesial topics, Hugenholtz thought, the importance of the magazine would increase. After all, as he felt, social issues were "far more important" than any church-related affair. Referring to the outcome of the Dutch Reformed synodal deliberations in 1880, the editor-in-chief noted that all of modernists' "ecclesial illusions" had evaporated into thin air. Modernists should therefore not be fixated on church reforms and should rather increase their efforts to spread their principles in society at large.¹¹⁶ As of 1883, Hugenholtz took action on these intentions. He arranged with Tj. van Holkema,¹¹⁷ who had replaced J.F.V. Behrns as publisher in October 1882,¹¹⁸ to extend the number of columns per page from three to four. This better utilisation of space enabled Hugenholtz to bring the social relevance of the modernist movement in general, and the NPB in particular, even more into the limelight – something he considered to be, as he told his readers in the first issue of 1883, absolutely necessary. If modernists were truly convinced that their religious principles were beneficial to the common good, they should not hesitate to "scatter the good seed" outside of their own religious orbit.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁴ H.Ph. de Kanter, 'Twee voorzitters', *De Hervorming* 1880-16 (17 April 1880), 61-62, here 61.

¹¹⁵ [H.Y. Groenewegen in: J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Ons weekblad', *Ibid.* 1897-47 (20 November 1897), 186-187, here 186; N.J. Beversen, 'Nogmaals: onze partij', *Ibid.* 1898-04 (22 January 1898), 13; G.J. Heering, 'Ingezonden – "Hervorming" en "Stroom"', *Ibid.* 1923-02 (13 January 1923), 14; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, 'Twee kwesties', *Ibid.* 1926-45 (6 November 1926), 354-355.

¹¹⁶ [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'Binnenland – Nieuwjaar', *Ibid.* 1882-01 (7 January 1882), 3.

¹¹⁷ This publishing house would be renamed 'Van Holkema & Warendorf' in May 1891.

¹¹⁸ The issue of 21 October 1882 (1882-42) mentions that Van Holkema had replaced Behrns on 1 October 1882, although the issues of 7 and 14 October still carried Behrns's name.

¹¹⁹ [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'Particuliere en algemeene wenschen', *De Hervorming* 1883-01 (6 January 1883), 1.

Hugenholtz managed to give *De Hervorming* a certain appeal. Although a new modernist periodical, the Rotterdam-based weekly *De Protestant* (*The Protestant*), came into being in January 1883,¹²⁰ the number of subscriptions of the former steadily grew: between January and March 1883, the magazine gained one hundred and six new subscribers. In 1884, this number would grow even further as a result of the liquidation of the Amsterdam-based periodical *De Vrijheid*. A part of the readership of this magazine took out a subscription to *De Hervorming*.¹²¹ The increase in the number of subscribers did not keep pace with the growth of the number of NPB members, but all in all, Hugenholtz had reason to be satisfied.

His editorship came to an unexpected end in October 1885, when Hugenholtz accepted a position as minister of a small, recently founded liberal congregation in the primarily orthodox Protestant Dutch immigrant community of Grand Rapids, Michigan.¹²² Yet he did not put his pen completely aside. Between late December 1885 and 1896, he would occasionally write letters in *De Hervorming* about liberal Protestantism in America. Moreover, he founded a modernist opinion magazine, called '*Stemmen uit de Vrije Hollandsche Gemeente te Grand Rapids*' ('*Voices from the Free Dutch Congregation in Grand Rapids*'), almost immediately after his arrival in the New World in 1886.¹²³ Before leaving for Michigan, Hugenholtz managed to persuade J. van Loenen Martinet to replace him.¹²⁴

At the start of his second term as editor-in-chief, Van Loenen Martinet wrote that he wanted to edit *De Hervorming* in the same spirit as Hugenholtz.¹²⁵ Indeed he did; combining his editorship with a position as a preacher in the Dutch Reformed Church – even succeeding Hugenholtz as a minister in Santpoort¹²⁶ –, Van Loenen Martinet was just as critical of the existing churches as his predecessor. When the Kuyparian faction in the Dutch Reformed Church provoked an inner-church schism during the so-called *Doleantie* (literally: *Lamentation*), starting in early 1886, he therefore greeted this rupture as a possible beginning of the reconfiguration of church life he

120 'Wat wij willen', *De Protestant* 1.1 (6 January 1883), 1-2, here 2.

121 [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], '"De Hervorming" en hare zusterbladen', *De Hervorming* 1884-02 (12 January 1884), 7.

122 P. van Wanroy, 'De stichting der Vrije Hollandsche Gemeente te Grand Rapids, Michigan', *Stemmen uit de Vrije Hollandsche Gemeente te Grand Rapids* 1 (1886), 6-11. The Free Dutch Congregation in Grand Rapids was incorporated into the NPB as a branch in 1889.

123 [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'Een woord vooraf', *Ibid.* 1 (1886), 1-6.

124 J. van Loenen Martinet, 'Tot afscheid', *De Hervorming* 1913-52 (27 December 1913), 414-415.

125 J. van Loenen Martinet, 'Een woord vooraf', *Ibid.* 1885-40 (3 October 1885), 158.

126 Reefhuis, *De Dorpskerk in Santpoort*, 25, 33.

hoped for.¹²⁷ Chapter 4 addresses this issue more thoroughly. Another characteristic Van Loenen Martinet and Hugenholtz had in common was a progressive liberal political viewpoint, tending towards social democracy. While Hugenholtz had still felt the need to accentuate the anti-religious and 'vulgar' spirit of the early socialist labour movement in his editorials, only to 'convert' to socialism after his move to Grand Rapids, Van Loenen Martinet did not hesitate to show socialism to its best advantage.¹²⁸ According to his necrologist H. Oort, his political convictions, on which chapter 7 focuses, closely approached those of the future *Sociaal-Democratische Arbeiderspartij* (Social Democratic Workers' Party or SDAP).¹²⁹ A last characteristic that Van Loenen Martinet shared with Hugenholtz was a strong drive to stress the social relevance of liberal Protestantism. As noted above, Hugenholtz had expressed this drive by advocating the creation of a 'popular magazine' next to *De Hervorming*. As of January 1888, his wish finally came true; from then on, the NPB issued, in cooperation with the *Vereeniging tot verspreiding van stichtelijke blaadjes* (Association for the Dissemination of Edifying Treatises), a new weekly called '*Nieuw Leven*' ('*New Life*').¹³⁰ As a result, *De Protestant* disappeared: its editors did not want to compete with the new magazine.¹³¹ Van Loenen Martinet could now specifically target a readership of ministers and 'educated laypeople' for *De Hervorming*.

The establishment of *Nieuw Leven* more or less coincided with a gradual editorial reorientation, the second one in the history of *De Hervorming*. Starting in the late 1880s, the attention given to social issues began to surpass the amount of articles devoted to church affairs. Four factors can be held responsible for this. The first factor was Van Loenen Martinet himself. He was one of those modernists who felt that the NPB should focus less on church life and more on society. Consequently, he frankly discussed (socialist) politics in his editorials, contrary to the wishes of part of his readership. Moreover, to the view of some modernists who attached more value to the institution of the church than he did, Van Loenen Martinet brought his distaste of denominational church life too much to the fore. As early as the au-

127 E.g.: [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Recht én recht', *De Hervorming* 1887-30 (23 July 1887), 118; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Toch een leuze', *Ibid.* 1889-02 (12 January 1889), 7; Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* 111, 44.

128 See also: Krijger, 'Een vrijzinnige "meneer"', 53.

129 Oort, 'Levensbericht van Johannes van Loenen Martinet', 60.

130 [J. van Loenen Martinet], "Nieuw Leven", *De Hervorming* 1888-01 (7 January 1888), 1. Er-roneously, this issue was dated 7 January 1887.

131 [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Afgelost!', *Ibid.* 1887-47 (19 November 1887), 187; 'Aan onze lezers', *De Protestant* v.52 (24 December 1887), 1-2.

tumn of 1886, the prominent NPB member J. Knappert (1836-1893) complained that non-modernists might interpret Van Loenen Martinet's pronounced anti-denominational stand to be *the* official policy line of the NPB.¹³² H.J. Lammerink (1830-1891), a board member of the NPB branch in The Hague, repeated this criticism at the 1887 NPB assembly. In imitation of the *Kerkelijke Courant*, *De Hervorming* should be divided, Lammerink therefore suggested, into an official part, reserved for statements made by the executive board of the NPB, and an unofficial part, for which Van Loenen Martinet would bear full responsibility. That way, it would become more evident that the editorials in *De Hervorming* did not necessarily represent the entire NPB.¹³³ Lammerink's suggestion was not adopted, but the assembly did decide to change the subtitle of *De Hervorming* from 'Orgaan van den Nederlandschen Protestantenvond' ('Periodical of the NPB') into 'Uitgegeven door den Nederlandschen Protestantenvond' ('Issued by the NPB').¹³⁴ In doing so, more distance was created between the corporate owner of *De Hervorming* and the editor-in-chief. The way in which Van Loenen Martinet edited the periodical thus provoked some discussion and even annoyance. However, he generously gave modernists who disagreed with his views the opportunity to express themselves in *De Hervorming*. As he would later state, Van Loenen Martinet considered the magazine to be "an open tribune, accessible to every modernist who has something to say and knows how to say it."¹³⁵ Nevertheless, this editorial policy could not prevent subscription rates from steadily declining. After reaching its all-time peak of 1,161 subscribers in 1886,¹³⁶ *De Hervorming* lost slightly more than two hundred subscribers in the subsequent years.

Internal developments in the Dutch Reformed Church were a second reason why less attention began to be paid in *De Hervorming* to church affairs. Although the *Doleantie* did not bring about a permanent solution to the antagonism between modernists and those orthodox Calvinists who stayed behind in the Dutch Reformed Church, it did lead, as an 'aftershock', to a general desire to protect the church from further disintegration.¹³⁷ Consequently, the factional struggle lost its intensity and even quietened down to a great extent, only to flame up again in the course of the 1890s. After the *Doleantie* reached

132 [J. Knappert in: J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Het kerkelijk vraagstuk in "De Hervorming"', *De Hervorming* 1886-46 (13 November 1886), 185.

133 H.J. Lammerink, 'Ingezonden stukken', *Ibid.* 1887-42 (15 October 1887), 168.

134 The first number to have this new subtitle was: *Ibid.* 1887-46 (12 November 1887).

135 [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Een nieuw begin', *Ibid.* 1898-02 (8 January 1898), 5.

136 Van Driel, "De Hervorming", 144.

137 W. Nijenhuis, 'De Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk en de Doleantie', in: W. Bakker et al. (eds.), *De Doleantie van 1886 en haar geschiedenis* (Kampen 1986), 178-202, here 201.

its climax in 1888, the year in which the highest secular judicial authority in the Netherlands ruled against all Kuyparian claims to church property, there were simply fewer factional quarrels on which to report.¹³⁸

A third motive was the development of the modernist movement itself. Prior to the 1880s, modernists had been firmly convinced that the orthodox resistance they encountered was just a momentary obstacle to the ultimate triumph of liberal Protestantism. However, in the 1880s it became clear that modernists' influence was not increasing; quite the contrary, even the exodus of Kuyparians would not really change modernists' position in the Dutch Reformed Church. As early as 1886, one modernist observer warned his fellow liberal church members that the "fear of Kuypers," in which all other factions were united, was no everlasting bonding agent among them.¹³⁹ Because it gradually began to dawn upon modernists that the advance of their movement had come to a halt in church life, voices calling for more attempts to influence social life swelled.

A fourth and last factor that intensified a new focus on social matters was public debate in general: in the late 1880s, discussions on the unwanted side effects of capitalist industrialisation were omnipresent.¹⁴⁰

Although a controversy with a member of the executive board of the NPB, dealt with in chapter 7, forced Van Loenen Martinet to abstain from writing editorials with strong political undertones, the editorial course he set out in the late 1880s basically stayed the same until the end of the 1890s. Regarding church and theology, few modernist achievements could be observed in this period, which has therefore been characterised as a decade of weakening and stagnation.¹⁴¹ Modernists were not seen to possess as much zeal as ten to twenty years before; their active and passive participation in church council

138 J.C. Rullmann, *De Doleantie in de Nederlandsch Hervormde Kerk der XIX^e eeuw* (Amsterdam 1916), 222-228.

139 V.D., 'Ingezonden stukken', *De Hervorming* 1886-52 (25 December 1886), 210.

140 P.J.M. de Coninck, *Een les uit Pruisen. Nederland en de Kulturkampf, 1870-1880* (Hilversum 2005), 397.

141 Between 1885 and 1900, *De Hervorming* contained numerous articles in which the perceived indifference, both in society at large and within the modernist movement itself, was lamented. E.g.: [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'De verdreven, doch terugkeerende booze geest', *De Hervorming* 1885-28 (11 July 1885), 109-110; W. Zaalberg, 'Bedroefd en nochtans blijde', *Ibid.* 1886-23 (5 June 1886), 89-90; W. Zaalberg, 'Binnenland – Het karakter van onzen bond en de historie', *Ibid.* 1887-33 (13 August 1887), 130-131, here 131; J.H. Maronier, 'Een getuigenis', *Ibid.* 1891-36 (5 September 1891), 143; 'Nederlandsche Protestantenvbond – Afd. Amsterdam', *Ibid.* 1892-03 (16 January 1892), 10; L. Knappert, 'Tegen den stroom in', *Ibid.* 1893-23 (10 June 1893), 89-90; P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., 'Ons Allerheiligen', *Ibid.* 1898-45 (5 November 1898), 179-180, here 179.

elections was rather low. The expectations of the earliest modernists and the founders of the NPB had not been fulfilled, which led to a search for new goals on the one hand, and to defeatism and acquiescence on the other. Finally, the numerical growth of the NPB itself came to a halt. One of the consequences of this malaise was that several modernist periodicals, such as the *Bibliotheek voor Moderne Theologie en Letterkunde*, *Geloof en Leven*, *Morgenlicht* (Dawn), and *Los en Vast* (Movable and Immovable),¹⁴² all ceased to exist due to a lack of interest.¹⁴³ For the same reason, the *Bijblad van De Hervorming* was issued for a last time in 1897.¹⁴⁴ *De Hervorming* was one of very few liberal Protestant periodicals that still existed in the late 1890s.

Afterwards, the atmosphere within the Dutch modernist movement became perceptibly different. Ecclesial and denominational awareness markedly intensified.¹⁴⁵ The interest in theology and church affairs grew. In consequence, *De Hervorming* began to devote more attention to church and theology once again. This editorial reorientation, the third in the history of the magazine, was primarily stimulated by three developments. First, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the NPB, celebrated in 1895, incited liberal Protestants to reflect upon their achievements so far. The outcome of their reflections was not particularly comforting. A couple of weeks before the 1895 NPB assembly, Miss E.C. Knappert (1860-1952) wrote an article in *De Hervorming* in which she attributed the 'stagnation' of the modernist movement in the preceding decade to liberal Protestants' inability to turn their religious community into a mass movement. Modernists had not been able to propagate their principles within the lower strata of society, because of a lack of confidence in the strength of their own religious ideas and ideals, and because of the intellectualist character that still stuck to liberal Protestantism.¹⁴⁶ Others were less pessimistic, but agreed with E.C. Knappert that the NPB was not as influential

142 *Los en Vast* was issued between 1866 and 1896 and (anonymously) edited by G. van Gorkom, H.G. Hagen (1831-1901), W. Scheffer (1823-1904), and R. Koopmans van Boekeren (1832-1896). According to Ten Brink, *Los en Vast* was founded "in order to have a say in the defence of the modernist movement in academic theology and the Dutch Reformed Church – the movement in which they believed with much ardour." Quoted from: J. ten Brink, *Geschiedenis der Noord-Nederlandsche Letteren in de XIX^e eeuw, in biographieën en bibliographieën, 1830-1880* III (Amsterdam 1889), 16.

143 [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Ons weekblad', *De Hervorming* 1897-47 (20 November 1897), 186-187.

144 [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Een nieuw begin', *Ibid.* 1898-02 (8 January 1898), 5.

145 Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III, 49.

146 E.C. Knappert, 'Wij modernen en het "volk"', *De Hervorming* 1895-41 (12 October 1895), 161-162, here 161.

or as powerful as it should be. W. Zaalberg praised the NPB for "having rescued thousands from a lapse into unbelief" and for "having fed thousands of children with spiritual brightness," although he criticised the lukewarmness that he perceived among its members.¹⁴⁷ B.W. Colenbrander congratulated the NPB for its propaganda efforts, but noted with regret that the "purification of the ecclesial situation," to which modernists had aspired for so long, was still not realised.¹⁴⁸

During the 1895 general assembly, Van Loenen Martinet expressed himself in a similar vein. In the speech with which he opened the meeting, he asserted that the NPB should not be too satisfied with itself. "After all, what I hear as a complaint, as an accusation and a condemnatory verdict against us, is that our aim is too vague and too broad; that our principles do not give people enough to hold on to; that our convictions are too indefinite and ill-defined; that the entirety of our tenets is too small; and that our faith is extremely insignificant."¹⁴⁹ In the following years, leading NPB members H.Y. Groenewegen (1862-1930) and L. Knappert (1863-1934) endorsed Van Loenen Martinet's analysis. Nevertheless, they held *De Hervorming* partly responsible for modernists' lack of influence. The magazine was the 'standard bearer' of the modernist movement, but failed to turn this movement into a more tightly organised party, strong enough to have a bigger say in church and social life than it had had so far.¹⁵⁰ Although he felt that the word 'party' was rather ill-chosen, as it implied that modernists should all sing the same song, Van Loenen Martinet did take this criticism to heart: in 1898, he expressed the hope that *De Hervorming* would become more influential in public debate.¹⁵¹

Alongside a certain disappointment over the stagnated growth of the modernist movement, a decision that the NPB made with regard to social work was another reason for Van Loenen Martinet to readjust the focus of *De Hervorming*. As of the late 1880s, several NPB branches had begun to organise social welfare activities. Moreover, a national 'commission for social interests' was active within the NPB with the intention of reflecting upon the contribution modernists could make to the eradication of social evils. A lively dis-

147 W. Zaalberg, 'Onze feestdag', *De Hervorming* 1895-43 (26 October 1895), 170.

148 B.W. Colenbrander, 'Onze feestdag', *Ibid.* 1895-43 (26 October 1895), 170.

149 J. van Loenen Martinet, 'Toespraak', *Ibid.* 1895-44 (2 November 1895), 173-174, here 173.

150 [H.Y. Groenewegen in: J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Ons weekblad', *Ibid.* 1897-47 (20 November 1897), 186-187, here 186; H.Y. Groenewegen, 'Onze partij', *Ibid.* 1898-03 (15 January 1898), 9.

151 [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Een nieuw begin', *Ibid.* 1898-02 (8 January 1898), 5. See also: [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Nogmaals: onze partij', *Ibid.* 1898-04 (22 January 1898), 13.

cussion consequently sprang up in NPB circles on the question of whether social welfare activities should be centrally coordinated and integrated within the framework of the national NPB. Ultimately, as chapters 6 and 7 show, this question was answered negatively.¹⁵² As a result, the focus of the NPB, and hence of *De Hervorming*, came to be less on social issues.

A third reason for church affairs and theological themes to regain prominence as of the late 1890s was what can best be called an 'ecclesial turn' in the modernist movement, thoroughly analysed in chapter 4. Dutch Reformed, Remonstrant, Mennonite, and Lutheran modernists all became more preoccupied with their own church communities, which did not mean that they were no longer willing to collaborate and to strengthen the modernist movement at large, but did lead them to make sure that the augmentation of the modernist movement as a whole, particularly a growth of the NPB, would not come at their own expense. Church practices and the institution of the church came to be appreciated more than before, even in the NPB. The emergence of discontentment and right-wing modernism, which linked up more closely to 'traditional' Christianity than old-school modernism, intensified this trend. Although the old-school modernist Van Loenen Martinet, who continued to believe that the church was an outmoded institution, was not very pleased with this trend, he could simply not ignore the 'ecclesial turn' that the modernist movement was taking.¹⁵³

In 1900, the format of the magazine, which had not fundamentally changed since the first issue of the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad* in 1869, underwent a metamorphosis. New sections were introduced and existing sections were re-shuffled. The periodical was no longer issued in folio, but in quarto. Instead of four pages, an issue of *De Hervorming* now contained at least eight pages. These alterations did not lead to a price increase: the annual subscription price would only change in 1918, the year in which a fourth editorial reorientation took place.

152 E.g.: H.C. Lohr, 'Een onuitgesproken woord', *De Hervorming* 1898-47 (19 November 1898), 187; G. van Rossen Hoogendijk, 'Het maatschappelijk werk in den bond in verband met de besluiten der algemeene vergadering', *Ibid.* 1898-51 (17 December 1898), 204; 1898-53 (31 December 1898), 212; 1899-03 (21 January 1899), 10; 1899-06 (11 February 1899), 22; A. Carlier, 'Maatschappelijke belangen – De bond en maatschappelijk werk', *Ibid.* 1898-53 (31 December 1898), 212; 'Maatschappelijke belangen – Uit het verslag der handelingen van de algemeene vergadering, 1 en 2 Nov. '98', *Ibid.* 1899-01 (7 January 1899), 2; I. van den Bergh, 'Maatschappelijke belangen', *Ibid.* 1899-01 (7 January 1899), 2; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Art. 1 van het algem. reglement', *Ibid.* 1899-04 (28 January 1899), 14-15.

153 Krijger, 'Een vrijzinnige "meneer"', 50.

Having experienced serious health problems in 1911, Van Loenen Martinet decided to retire at the end of 1913.¹⁵⁴ More than thirty-two years of editorial involvement with the leading Dutch modernist opinion magazine, four of them as co-editor of the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad* and twenty-eight years as editor-in-chief of *De Hervorming*, now came to an end. The Dutch Reformed minister emeritus H. de Lang (1846-1932), whose first contribution to *De Hervorming* had been published in 1878 and who had been the editor of the foreign section since 1884, succeeded him.¹⁵⁵ In an attempt to reduce the costs of publication, De Lang took over the publicity and administration of the magazine from publishing house Van Holkema & Warendorf in October 1914.¹⁵⁶ He followed the same editorial course as Van Loenen Martinet, with whom he had worked in close collaboration from 1901 onwards.¹⁵⁷ Although Lindeboom felt that "possibly the best years" in the sixty-two-year history of *De Hervorming* were those in which Hugenholtz had held editorial sway,¹⁵⁸ most other commentators concluded in retrospect that the best years of the magazine were those in which Van Loenen Martinet and De Lang had been in charge.¹⁵⁹

In 1917, the executive board of the NPB felt that the existing editorial formula of *De Hervorming* had worn thin. Its ambition was to give the magazine a more 'popular' character in order to gain a larger readership; the financial situation of *De Hervorming* necessitated this. At the same time, the board wanted to give the magazine more influence in public debate outside of the modernist movement. Van Loenen Martinet had stated this as his aim already in 1898, but had not been successful. Quite the contrary, as the next chapters demonstrate, the feeling of marginalisation in both church life and social life had become stronger and stronger in modernist circles in the early twentieth century. There was a general feeling that voices expressing themselves in

154 Van Driel, "De Hervorming", 144.

155 H. de Lang, 'Niet-kosteloos godsdienstonderwijs', *De Hervorming* 1878-04 (26 January 1878), 1-2.; H. de Lang, "De Hervorming" 50 jaar', *Ibid.* 1925-47 (21 November 1925), 369-370, here 369.

156 [H. de Lang], 'Redactioneel – In 't nieuwe pak', *Ibid.* 1914-40 (3 October 1914), 341-342.

157 H. de Lang, "De Hervorming" 50 jaar', *Ibid.* 1925-48 (28 November 1925), 377-378.

158 Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III, 51.

159 E.g.: [H.G. van Wijngaarden in:] 'Kerknieuws', *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* LXXVII.306 (4 November 1920), evening paper A, 1; J.J. Meyer, '25 jaren kerknieuws', *Het Vaderland* (23 August 1923), evening paper, 15; [H. Oort in: J.J. Meyer], 'Kerknieuws – "De Hervorming"', *Ibid.* (4 November 1926), evening paper D, 1; 'Redactioneel – "De Hervorming" en haar doktoren', *De Hervorming* 1926-45 (6 November 1926), 353-354, here 353; J.J. Meyer, 'H. de Lang †', *Het Vaderland* (24 September 1932), evening paper C, 1; J.J. Meyer, 'Kerkelijke pers, oud en nieuw', *Ibid.* (11 June 1942), morning paper, 2.

De Hervorming, the tribune of the modernist movement, were not heard loud enough in intellectual life at large. The Dutch Reformed minister A.H. van der Hoeve (1870-1943), the then general secretary of the national NPB, admitted that it was a great challenge to turn *De Hervorming* into a magazine with both a leading position in intellectual life and popular appeal, but he was optimistic about the chances of success: at the time, the NPB had 21,000 members, so it would be possible, he expected, to interest at least 10,000 people in taking out a subscription.¹⁶⁰ Another incentive for the executive board of the NPB to press for an editorial reform of *De Hervorming* was an increased competition in the liberal Protestant magazine market. With the creation of *Teekenen des Tijds* in 1899,¹⁶¹ *De Blijde Wereld* in 1902, and the *Weekblad voor de Vrijzinnige Hervormden* (*Weekly for Dutch Reformed Liberals*) in 1908, *De Hervorming* no longer had a monopoly on opinion making in modernist circles. Moreover, numerous local and regional magazines had seen the light in the early twentieth century, attracting a readership that might have otherwise taken a subscription to *De Hervorming*. Finally, another stimulus for an editorial reform was that, due to the aforementioned 'ecclesial turn' and feeling of marginalisation, the NPB was (again) going through an identity crisis.¹⁶²

Yet there was not enough enthusiasm in NPB branches for the editorial reform after which the board aspired. Some branches were in favour of turning *De Hervorming* into a magazine exclusively intended for 'intellectuals'; others opted for a transformation of *De Hervorming* into a news bulletin in the strict sense of the word, limiting itself to NPB-related matters.¹⁶³ Prominent NPB members shot down the board's proposal as well. H. Vrendenberg Czn. (1835-1918), who had been the editor-in-chief of *Nieuw Leven* from its creation in 1888 to 1913, did not believe that *De Hervorming* would ever be able to get 10,000 subscribers.¹⁶⁴ The jurist C. Bake (1856-1936) deemed it unwise to change the editorial format, as it functioned perfectly well in its current form as a platform for modernists to exchange opinions.¹⁶⁵ The journalist-minister C.E. Hooykaas (1878-1933) feared that a 'popularisation' of *De Hervorming*

160 A.H. van der Hoeve, 'Officiële mededeelingen', *De Hervorming* 1917-19 (12 May 1917), 159; 1917-20 (19 May 1917), 167.

161 Not to be confused with the already mentioned homonymic magazine that was published in 1858-1859.

162 A short retrospective of this identity crisis is given in: K.H. Boersema, 'Het vijf en zeventigjarig bestaan van den N.P.B.', *Bondsnieuws* v.10 (2 May 1946), 4.

163 A.H. van der Hoeve, 'Officiële mededeelingen', *De Hervorming* 1917-22 (2 June 1917), 183.

164 H. Vrendenberg Cz., 'Hoofdartikelen – Een herinnering van dertig jaren geleden', *Ibid.* 1917-26 (30 June 1917), 210-211.

165 C. Bake, 'Ingezonden', *Ibid.* 1917-32 (11 August 1917), 265.

would be the *coup de grâce* to the local and regional modernist press.¹⁶⁶ Even more important, De Lang himself was unfavourably disposed towards the plan to popularise *De Hervorming*.¹⁶⁷ A couple of weeks before the 1917 NPB assembly, Van der Hoeve therefore announced that the board no longer sought to give the magazine a more popular appeal, while keeping its other ambition: *De Hervorming* should convince the secularised or religiously indifferent political, intellectual, and cultural elite of the capacities of liberal Protestantism, demonstrating that the modernist movement had a word to say in all current affairs on political, intellectual, and cultural life.¹⁶⁸

The general assembly assented to this revised proposal.¹⁶⁹ As of January 1918, a five-man board of editors replaced De Lang. New sections were introduced. M.C. van Mourik Broekman was appointed as the editor of the section 'Religion and Philosophy', H.T. de Graaf became the editor of the section 'Religion and Society', the Dutch Reformed minister K.F. Proost (1883-1962) was approached to edit the section 'Arts and Literature', the Lutheran minister A.C. Schade van Westrum (1876-1929) was given the task of discussing church life in the Netherlands, and Van der Hoeve would write about NPB-related matters. These five editors were recruited from across the spectrum of the modernist movement, although right-wing modernists were not represented at the editorial level. This was, however, only accidental: the right-wing modernist G.J. Heering (1879-1955) had been asked to join the editorial board, but had rejected this invitation for unknown reasons.¹⁷⁰ *De Hervorming* would again be printed in folio, reducing the number of pages of each issue to four. Because magazines that were issued by a publishing house affiliated to the Dutch Publishers Association could be printed at a discount,¹⁷¹ it was decided to place the publicity and administration of *De Hervorming* with the publisher P.M. Wink in Zaltbommel. The annual subscription rate was lowered from f 4.80 to f 2.50.

The 1918 reorganisation turned out to be a fiasco. Almost from the very beginning, complaints were uttered about the long-windedness, complexity

166 C.E. Hooykaas, 'Ingezonden – "De Hervorming" hervormd?', *De Hervorming* 1917-39 (29 September 1917), 322-323.

167 Van Driel, "De Hervorming", 146; [H. de Lang], 'Redactioneel – De plannen met ons blad', *Ibid.* 1917-41 (13 October 1917), 339-340.

168 A.H. van der Hoeve, 'Ingezonden – Het Hervormingsplan', *Ibid.* 1917-40 (6 October 1917), 331-332.

169 C.E. Hooykaas, 'Godsdienstig leven in Nederland CCXX. Expansie in den Protestantenvond', *Algemeen Handelsblad* xc.28963 (7 November 1917), evening paper, 5.

170 Van Driel, "De Hervorming", 146.

171 [H. de Lang], 'Redactioneel – Eigen exploitatie of bemiddeling van een uitgever?', *De Hervorming* 1917-42 (20 October 1917), 347.

and limited newsworthiness of the articles published in the new sections. Although the number of subscribers initially slightly increased, particularly due to the lowered subscription fee, *De Hervorming* did not manage to meet the board's expectations. The magazine would be profitable if the number of 5,000 subscribers could be reached,¹⁷² but this target figure never came within reach. Because of this, and because of a severe rise in printing costs after the First World War, the subscription rate had to be raised to f 4.50 as of 1920. Accordingly, *De Hervorming* lost a significant part of its readership, leading to another price increase in February 1921 (f 4.70) and again in January 1922 (f 5.00).

The founding of *De Stroom* (*The Stream*) in 1922 led to a further decrease in the number of subscribers to *De Hervorming*. This weekly, of which C.E. Hooykaas and the Mennonite minister S.H.N. Gorter (1885-1967) were the editors-in-chief, closely resembled what *De Hervorming* had looked like before 1918, and hence was an interesting alternative to those who were displeased with the new style of *De Hervorming*.¹⁷³ *De Stroom* gradually took over the role as leading opinion magazine in the modernist movement. To turn the tide, *De Hervorming* was again printed in the handier quarto size as of 1921. New publishing houses were approached to make the magazine more profitable: the *Amsterdamsche Boek- en Steendrukkerij v/h Ellerman, Harms & Co.* in 1922, and *Van Loghum Slaterus & Visser* in 1923.¹⁷⁴ However, these external changes were of no avail as long as the content of *De Hervorming* continued to be, as one critic put it, "extremely hard to digest."¹⁷⁵

In 1924, the general assembly took action: the target audience of 'intellectuals' still ignored *De Hervorming*, while more and more NPB members discontinued their subscription. To stop this second trend, the magazine had to increase its coverage of affairs that were more strictly related to the NPB.¹⁷⁶ The wish to change the editorial formula yet again was linked with the development of the modernist movement. As the 'ecclesial turn' was severely challenging the position of the NPB, explained in chapter 4, it was deemed

172 A.H. van der Hoeve, 'Ingezonden – Het Hervormingsplan', *De Hervorming* 1917-40 (6 October 1917), 331-332, here 331.

173 *De Stroom* was originally meant to target readers in the region of Rotterdam. See: C.E. Hooykaas and S.H.N. Gorter, 'Met onze lezers – Ons doel en ons plan', *De Stroom* 1.1 (17 December 1921), 2. However, it soon gained a national readership. As of 5 January 1929, a separate supplement for readers in the region of Amsterdam was issued.

174 The *Amsterdamsche Boek- en Steendrukkerij v/h Ellerman, Harms & Co.* had already become the printing house of *De Hervorming* from January 1900 onwards.

175 H.U. Meyboom, 'Ingezonden', *De Hervorming* 1920-49 (11 December 1920), 195.

176 A.H. van der Hoeve, 'Hoofdartikel – De jaarvergadering van den Nederlandschen Protestantenvond te Rotterdam', *Ibid.* 1924-44 (1 November 1924), 345-347, here 346.

necessary to reinforce the *bondsbewustzijn* ('league consciousness') in modernist circles: modernists' awareness of having an organisation that served their common interests in the form of the NPB had to be increased, as well as their commitment to the NPB. After the 1924 NPB meeting, the five editors of *De Hervorming* entered into negotiations with *De Stroom* about some form of cooperation and also had talks with the editorial board of the *Algemeen Weekblad voor Vrijzinnig-Godsdienstigen* (*General Weekly for Religious Liberals*) about producing an NPB newsletter that could be a supplement to this magazine. Because these attempts failed and their own enthusiasm to devote more attention to NPB-related matters in *De Hervorming* was low, the editors felt compelled to resign.¹⁷⁷

In the last issue of 1924, Van Mourik Broekman, De Graaf, Proost, Schade van Westrum, and Van der Hoeve looked back upon the seven years in which they had staffed the editorial board of *De Hervorming*. They indicated that they regarded all criticism that they had received during those seven years as inappropriate. After all, in 1918, they had been specifically instructed to write their articles with a readership of 'intellectuals' in mind. Instead of blaming the editors for not striking a more popular note, those modernists who had complained about the new style of *De Hervorming* would have been better off asking themselves "whether they, for their part, have made the mental effort necessary to read a magazine that could not be and was not allowed to be a popular magazine."¹⁷⁸ Nonetheless, historiography would pass a scathing judgment on the quintet. In 1935, Lindeboom wrote that the fiasco of the 1918 editorial reform was "commensurate" with the "enthusiasm and clarion call" with which this reform had been announced in 1918. According to him, and J.J. Meyer,¹⁷⁹ the five editors had demonstrated that they were not as journalistically gifted as Hugenholtz, Van Loenen Martinet, and De Lang, the last of whom "probably was the most competent editor *De Hervorming* has ever had."¹⁸⁰ Some of the editors, Lindeboom continued, "wrote in a too cerebral way, others discussed matters almost no-one cared about, [and] the editor of the church section was particularly adept at venting harsh criticism regarding everything related to the church." As a result, "the magazine that should have satisfied everybody eventually satisfied nobody."¹⁸¹ In 1989, J.P. Heering

177 Van Driel, "De Hervorming", 148.

178 M.C. van Mourik Broekman et al., 'Aan onze lezers', *De Hervorming* 1924-52 (27 December 1924), 409-410, here 409.

179 Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III, 99; J.J. Meyer, 'Kerkelijke pers, oud en nieuw', *Het Vaderland* (11 June 1942), morning paper, 2.

180 Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III, 99, note 1.

181 *Ibid.*, 99.

expressed himself in a similar vein. He wittily (though rather exaggeratedly) remarked that between 1918 and 1924, “the section on church affairs became ever smaller and less meaningful, while the one on arts and literature more or less became the most sizeable and most important section [of *De Hervorming*].”¹⁸²

As of January 1925, the former Lutheran minister A.E.F. Junod (1876-1944), who had gained experience in the magazine industry as the editor of the liberal Lutheran monthly *De Wachter* (*The Watchman*), was responsible for the content of *De Hervorming*. Promising to write in a more accessible style than his five predecessors,¹⁸³ Junod’s main concern was to raise the number of subscribers by at least 300.¹⁸⁴ To accentuate that *De Hervorming* would now pay more attention to what was going on *within* the NPB, its subtitle was changed into ‘*Centraal Orgaan van den Nederlandschen Protestantenvbond*’ (‘*Central Magazine of the Dutch League of Protestants*’). Just as in previous cases, the switch to a new editor-in-chief was coupled with a switch to a new publishing house located in proximity to this new editor’s domicile, in this case to the ‘s-Gravenhaagsche Boek- en Handelsdrukkerij v/h Gebr. Giunta d’Albani.

However, criticism on *De Hervorming* did not die down. Complaints were made that the new editorial formula, in which the magazine would both be the official newsletter of the NPB and deal with current affairs in a broader sense, was half-hearted. As an opinion magazine, critics argued that *De Hervorming* was no longer needed.¹⁸⁵ Next to *De Stroom*, the weekly *Kerk en Volk* (*Church and Nation*), created as a merger of the *Weekblad voor de Vrijzinnige Hervormden* and the *Algemeen Weekblad voor Vrijzinnig-Godsdienstigen* in 1925, was there to serve “those who ask us, proponents of free religiosity and men of the church, to give them guidance on the broad spectrum of life and to highlight the relevance and essentiality of the church amidst our nation.”¹⁸⁶ Moreover, in January 1926, *De Smidse* (*The Forge*) joined the ranks of modernist opinion magazines. This monthly, published by Van Loghum Slaterus, was edited by, among others, Van Mourik Broekman, De Graaf, and Proost, whereas Schade

182 J.P. Heering, ‘Het vrijzinnig protestantisme op de drempel van een nieuwe tijd (1900-1925)’, in: Klein Wassink and Van Leeuwen, *Tussen geest en tijdgeest*, 57-160, here 132.

183 A.E.F. Junod, ‘Redactioneel – “De Hervorming” voorheen en voortaan’, *De Hervorming* 1925-01 (3 January 1925), 1-3, here 3.

184 A.E.F. Junod, ‘Aan alle lezers, vrienden van “De Hervorming”’, *Ibid.* 1924-50 (13 December 1924), 393; 1924-51 (20 December 1924), 401; 1924-52 (27 December 1924), 409. Junod is erroneously called ‘E.A.F. Junod’ in these three articles.

185 Van Driel, “De Hervorming”, 149.

186 F.H.G. van Itersen, ‘Strijd en opbouw – het nieuwe begin’, *Kerk en Volk* 1.1 (3 January 1925), 1.

van Westrum was listed among its 'regular contributors'. The resemblance to *De Hervorming* in its pre-1925 format was so obvious that the editors of *De Smidse* straightforwardly admitted that it was indeed their intention to do what *De Hervorming* had previously tried to do: permeating intellectual life with a modernist spirit.¹⁸⁷ Even though *De Smidse* would not lead to as big a decrease in the number of subscriptions to *De Hervorming* as he feared, Junod initially considered it to be a "great threat." He interpreted the creation of *De Smidse* as a stab in the back, as a condemnation of his effort to turn the new editorial formula of *De Hervorming* into a success.¹⁸⁸

De Hervorming had not only become redundant as an opinion magazine, but also as a magazine reporting on meetings and gatherings held in the modernist movement. In the early twentieth century, newspapers with politically liberal leanings, such as the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, the *Algemeen Handelsblad*, and *Het Vaderland* had begun to report extensively on such meetings and gatherings. What is more, the editors of the church sections of the three newspapers mentioned here – C.E. Hooykaas, working for the *Algemeen Handelsblad*, J.J. Meyer, working for *Het Vaderland*, and H.C.S. Wanting (1881-1953) and H.G. Cannegieter Dzn. (1880-1966), both working for the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* – were themselves (former) ministers with modernist sympathies.¹⁸⁹

The executive board of the NPB soon became dissatisfied with the new editorial formula itself as well. It wanted to use *De Hervorming* to avert a crisis within the NPB. Through the years, the executive board had appropriated more and more authority, at the expense of, and to the growing displeasure of, local branches. The board hoped that it could decrease tensions if it could give account of its activities and decisions throughout the year and if branches could inform each other about their activities on a regular basis. Ideally, every branch should therefore have at least one subscription to *De Hervorming*. A commission chaired by B.D. Eerdmans (1868-1948), established at the 1925 NPB assembly to reflect upon the ongoing identity crisis with which the NPB was

187 'Ter inleiding', *De Smidse* 1.1 (January 1926), 1-4.

188 [A.E.F. Junod], 'Nieuwe bladen en tijdschriften', *De Hervorming* 1925-48 (28 November 1925), 381.

189 For Hooykaas, see: A.C. Schade van Westrum, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Onze bladen', *Ibid.* 1922-52 (30 December 1922), 411-413, here 411. For Wanting and Cannegieter, see: H., 'Kerkelijk leven – Een interview over de kerk', *Ibid.* 1919-16 (19 April 1919), 63; 'H.C.S. Wanting – 25 jaar aan de N.R.C.', *De Nederlandsche Journalist* 11.15 (1942), 10. For Meyer, see: 'Ds. J.J. Meyer', *Het Vaderland* (22 August 1928), evening paper A, 1. Meyer consistently referred to modernism with the possessive form of the first person plural. See: Krijger, 'Een vrijzinnige "meneer"', 38, note 7.

confronted, accordingly advised turning *De Hervorming* into a monthly, in order to lower expenses and to satisfy board members of local branches who raised doubts about the amount of money annually spent on the preservation of a magazine that was only read by “five per cent of all NPB members.”¹⁹⁰ In addition, it proposed to turn *De Hervorming* into a newsletter in the strictest sense possible and to send a copy of every issue to all branches.¹⁹¹

Recognising that *De Hervorming* in its current form “no longer [had] a right to exist amongst dozens of other [modernist magazines] and church sections of daily newspapers,” modernist veteran H. Oort did not endorse those recommendations. In his eyes, the magazine should continue to be issued on a weekly basis and should cover “everything occurring in our own circles and all events occurring in those of non-modernists that are relevant to us.” He specifically urged devoting more attention to developments among liberal Protestants abroad.¹⁹² In fact, Oort advocated turning *De Hervorming* back into what it had been between 1875 and 1917. L. de Baan (1880–1929), the editor-in-chief of the fortnightly *Noorderlicht* (*Northern Lights*), a magazine distributed in the three northernmost provinces, made a similar plea.¹⁹³ Periodicals such as *De Stroom*, *Kerk en Volk*, and local church bulletins had not caused *De Hervorming* to lose its significance; rather, they gave it a new right to exist. Being the official journal of the NPB, it was, according to De Baan, the obvious magazine to anthologise the most interesting articles published in other modernist periodicals. Additionally, it should contain announcements concerning all kinds of liberal Protestant organisations, and review books written by modernists.¹⁹⁴ J.J. Meyer, on the other hand, expressed serious doubts about the viability of *De Hervorming* in whatever form.¹⁹⁵

Van Mourik Broekman intervened in the discussion as well. Acknowledging that *De Hervorming* had never had a popular appeal, he would regret to see it disappear. Less people had taken a subscription to *De Hervorming* than the

190 B.D. Eerdmans and J. van Dijk, ‘Rapport Commissie Enschede’, appendix to *De Hervorming* 1926–41 (9 October 1926), 1–10, here 8.

191 *Ibid.*

192 H. Oort, ‘De toekomst van “De Hervorming”’, *Ibid.* 1926–42 (16 October 1926), 331–332, here 331. Oort received support in: A. Rutgers van der Loeff, ‘Indië en de reorganisatie der “Hervorming”’, *Ibid.* 1926–44 (30 October 1926), 346.

193 J. Hagedoorn, *Overdracht van meer dan letters. . . Van Gorcum 1800–2000* (Assen 2000), 117; ‘Kerknieuws – De vrijzinnig godsdienstige pers’, *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* LXXXI.359 (28 December 1924), morning paper C, 2.

194 L. de Baan, ‘Slechts twee mogelijkheden voor “De Hervorming”’, *De Hervorming* 1926–43 (23 October 1926), 338–339.

195 J.J. Meyer, ‘Kerknieuws – “De Hervorming”’, *Het Vaderland* (4 November 1926), evening paper D, 1.

NPB had hoped for, but the influence of the magazine on the modernist movement itself was definitely not proportionate to its small number of subscribers. *De Hervorming* had always had a readership consisting of theology professors, ministers, and 'educated' laymen, who were in a position "to let the insights they gained by reading and participating in the discussions in *De Hervorming* find their way into the entire modernist movement." Even though he had had his doubts about the editorial formula adopted in 1925, Van Mourik Broekman acknowledged that the magazine had addressed important issues in the past two years, which had not been discussed elsewhere.¹⁹⁶ It still made modernists aware of challenges and problems with which Dutch society in general, and their own movement in particular, were faced. Van Mourik Broekman rejected the suggestion of turning *De Hervorming* into a monthly, as a weekly frequency was more conducive to a profound exchange of ideas.¹⁹⁷

With the permission of the 1926 NPB assembly, the executive board of the NPB decided to follow the advice of the aforementioned commission, turning *De Hervorming* into a monthly magazine with a focus on NPB-related affairs. However, it simultaneously embraced Oort's and De Baan's suggestions: every NPB member should render an account of what was going on in liberal Protestantism at large. A section reviewing trends in the Dutch modernist movement as a whole and a section reflecting upon liberal Protestantism abroad were called for in an NPB newsletter.¹⁹⁸ The Lutheran minister and chairman of the board D. Drijver was appointed to edit the first section, while the former Dutch Reformed minister G.H. van Senden (1884-1968) was put in charge of the second one.¹⁹⁹ Junod continued to be the editor-in-chief. The annual subscription rate was lowered to f 1.50.²⁰⁰

Although Junod proved to be accommodating, the executive board of the NPB, evaluating the new situation after a year, felt the need to take charge of *De Hervorming* to an even greater extent. It therefore decided that its then chairman D. Drijver would not only continue to edit the section on Dutch liberal Protestantism, but would also assume the general editorship as of 1928.²⁰¹

196 M.C. Mourik Broekman, 'Twee kwesties', *De Hervorming* 1926-45 (6 November 1926), 354-355.

197 The *Algemeen Handelsblad* agreed: 'Kerknieuws – De Protestantenbond', *Algemeen Handelsblad* XCIX.32241 (2 December 1926), 10.

198 'De hervorming van "De Hervorming"', *De Hervorming* 1926-47 (20 November 1926), 370; 'De nieuwe "Hervorming"', *Ibid.* 1927-01 (1 January 1927), 2.

199 [A.E.F. Junod], 'Algemeen bericht', *Ibid.* 1926-51 (18 December 1926), 401.

200 *Ibid.* 1926-51 (18 December 1926).

201 S. Spaans, 'Bonds- en ander nieuws – Vergadering hoofdbestuur 7 December', *Ibid.* 1925-51 (19 December 1925), 405-406, here 405. Drijver had been a member of the editorial board of *De Smidse* in 1926 and 1927.

Commenting upon the board's seizure of editorial power in *Het Vaderland*, J.J. Meyer gave Drijver the benefit of the doubt; Drijver had "[journalistic] experience, a good [stylistic] taste and a good sense of humour" and might be able to improve the prospects of *De Hervorming*.²⁰² Seven months later, Meyer wrote that the magazine did indeed appear to be experiencing a "revival" with Drijver in charge.²⁰³ Yet, appearances were deceiving in this case as well: the number of subscriptions to *De Hervorming* continued to decline, generating a heavy financial burden on the executive board of the NPB. When, at the end of 1933, Drijver announced that he was joining the editorial board of the new journal *Opbouw* (*Advancement*), a merger of *De Stroom* and two smaller modernist periodicals,²⁰⁴ the board seized the moment to pull the plug on *De Hervorming*. The issue of 21 December 1934 was the final one. At the time, there were only six hundred subscribers left. In the article in which he looked back upon the history of *De Hervorming*, quoted at the beginning of this chapter, Meyer concluded that the magazine had simply outlived its usefulness. In late 1917, 1924 and 1926, its existence had already hung by a thread. In all three cases, *De Hervorming* had only received "the bread of charity out of respect for its illustrious past."²⁰⁵ As of 1935, the executive board communicated with NPB branches through *Bondsnieuws* (*NPB News*), a simple, monthly circular with no journalistic pretensions whatsoever.²⁰⁶

5 The Agency of *De Hervorming* within the Modernist Movement

The disappearance of *De Hervorming* was the disappearance of a genuine 'institution'. No other magazine had a position similar to *De Hervorming* in the modernist movement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. No other modernist magazine has ever reached the age of sixty-two, or even sixty-six if the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad* is included in the picture. Its special position also had to do with its affiliation to the NPB, the association that covered, as explained in the introductory chapter, the full breadth of the modernist

202 J.J. Meyer, 'Kerknieuws – "De Hervorming"', *Het Vaderland* (10 January 1928), evening paper B, 3.

203 J.J. Meyer, 'Kerknieuws – D. Drijver, 1903-19 juli-1928', *Ibid.* (18 July 1928), evening paper B, 2.

204 The *Vrijzinnig Protestantblad* (*Liberal Protestant Magazine*) and *Opbouw. Een blad voor Haarlem en omstreken* (*Advancement. A Magazine for Haarlem and Surroundings*). See: [W. Verkade], 'De inrichting van ons blad', *Opbouw* 1.1 (7 April 1934), 8.

205 J.J. Meyer, "'De Hervorming" †', *Het Vaderland* (29 December 1934), evening paper C, 2.

206 Van Driel, "'De Hervorming"', 151.

movement. Accordingly, the development of (Dutch) liberal Protestantism at large is reflected in *De Hervorming*. What is more, the history of the magazine symbolises this development. The polemical character of the magazine in the 1870s was symptomatic of modernists' preoccupation with factional quarrels in the Dutch Reformed Church and gave expression to modernists' expectation that their liberal Protestant ideas and ideals would become the new mainstream in church life. The stronger focus on social affairs in the late 1880s and the 1890s was emblematic of the increased effort to give liberal Protestantism more influence in social life. The fact that articles on church affairs regained prominence in the early twentieth century was a consequence of the 'ecclesial turn' that the modernist movement was taking. The editorial reforms that rapidly succeeded each other between 1917 and 1928 revealed that the modernist movement was trying to avoid further marginalisation and that the NPB was reconsidering its position within this movement. Finally, the switch from a weekly to a monthly frequency in 1927 was symbolic of the marginal position that modernists felt that they were in, as well as the loss of influence of the NPB in the modernist movement.²⁰⁷

As indicated above, the history of *De Hervorming* itself was the history of a magazine that quantitatively never entirely came up to the expectations of both its editors-in-chief and the executive board of the association with which it was affiliated. However, its press runs and number of subscriptions were not exceptionally low in comparison to other opinion magazines that were issued in Dutch Protestant circles. In 1882, for example, 3,800 copies of *De Hervorming* were printed each week, which was only 200 less than the number of copies printed of *De Heraut*, the neo-Calvinist weekly edited by Abraham Kuyper himself.²⁰⁸ Some 600 people had a subscription to *De Hervorming* on the eve of its disappearance, in 1934, while the number of subscribers to *De Heraut* was approximately 1,000 at around the same time.²⁰⁹ *De Heraut* nevertheless had a tremendous influence and prestige in neo-Calvinist circles; in fact, it played such an instrumental role in the abovementioned *Doleantie* in 1886, that it is legitimate to ask whether this schism in the Dutch Reformed Church would have become such a large-scale event, or would have occurred

²⁰⁷ Still in 1903, the Mennonite minister P. Feenstra, Jr. had called for a *daily* newspaper on modernist principles, after the example of Roman Catholic and neo-Calvinist dailies. Only then, he had argued, could modernists influence public opinion to a greater extent. See: [P. Feenstra, Jr. in:] 'Binnenland – Vergadering van moderne theologen', *Algemeen Handelsblad* LXXVI.23819 (1 September 1903), evening paper, 6.

²⁰⁸ Hemels, *De Nederlandse pers voor en na de afschaffing van het dagbladzegel*, 679.

²⁰⁹ Harinck, *De Reformatie*, 336.

at all, if *De Heraut* had not been there.²¹⁰ Even in the 1930s, “the weekly was held in high esteem in parsonages and consistories,” that is, among those who made the decisions and had the lead in neo-Calvinist church life.²¹¹ As a result, *De Heraut* still exerted a decisive influence on controversies arising in the Reformed Churches in that decade. In the context of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the number of copies of, and the number of subscriptions to, a magazine are therefore not an adequate measure of a magazine’s influence and significance. It is arguably more indicative to look at the prestige and readership of a magazine. This applies to *De Hervorming* as well. Although the subscription records of this magazine have not been preserved, it can safely be concluded that *De Hervorming* at least had a substantial number of theologians, including ministers, among its readership. After all, the great majority of the articles and letters to the editor published in the magazine were written by theologians. As substantiated in chapter 6, such theologians were just as much ‘in charge’ in liberal Protestant circles as they were in neo-Calvinist ones. They were the opinion leaders and the ones taking initiatives to concretise the endeavour of modernising Christianity and Christianising society. As the next chapters show in more detail, many of these initiatives stemmed from discussions held in *De Hervorming*. Modernist ministers knew that this magazine, due to the fact that it had been founded already in 1873 (or even 1869, if the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad* is taken into account), and its affiliation with the NPB (the central organisation within the modernist movement), had the most reach, prestige, and impact among modernists, and was therefore the main channel through which they could find support for their ideas. For these same reasons, *De Hervorming* fulfilled several roles in modernist circles simultaneously, thus having an agency in the modernist movement more significant than any other liberal Protestant opinion magazine.

A first function of *De Hervorming* was a propagandistic one. Ideas and ideals circulating in the full breadth of the modernist movement were put forward in *De Hervorming* and were supposed to make their way into public opinion *through* this magazine. If non-modernists wanted to know what was going on in the modernist movement at large, they could best do so by consulting *De Hervorming*, as these themselves acknowledged. As late as 1922, for example,

210 See, e.g.: W. Bakker, ‘De Doleantie in den lande. Uitbreiding en consolidatie’, in: Bakker et al. (eds.), *De Doleantie van 1886*, 106–148, here 129; Harinck, *De Reformatie*, 14. For the agency of opinion magazines in (neo-Calvinist) church life, see also: G. Harinck, “‘De Reformatie’ als motor van vernieuwingen’, *Radix* XIV (1988), 12–19.

211 Harinck, *De Reformatie*, 336.

the Kuiperian theologian V. Hepp (1879-1950) wrote in *De Reformatie* that "for outsiders, *De Hervorming* is still far more important than, for instance, the *Weekblad voor de Vrijzinnige Hervormden*."²¹²

Commenting upon current affairs from a modernist perspective was a second function of *De Hervorming*. Until the early twentieth century, there was a general feeling in modernist circles that newspapers with politically liberal leanings did not pay enough attention to religious life,²¹³ or neglected the interests of modernists, even though most of them were among their readers.²¹⁴ Yet a daily newspaper exclusively aligned with the modernist movement never came into being. Differences of opinion among modernists were simply too big. As Van Loenen Martinet explained in 1901, there also was a more fundamental reason for modernists not to follow the example of newspapers such as the Kuiperian *De Standaard* and the Roman Catholic *De Tijd*. Modernists, he argued, acknowledged that religion and politics were not mutually exclusive, but *De Standaard* and *De Tijd* mingled the two in a way that was detrimental to both religious life and political life. These newspapers equated the politics of the political parties that they backed, which were based on the religious beliefs of a particular group, with 'the will of God'. In the same line, those parties brutally denied supporters of other parties the right to call themselves 'Christians'.²¹⁵ Van Loenen Martinet feared that a modernist daily newspaper would run the risk of fostering such a spirit of confessionalism as well: it would inevitably deal with political matters as if these matters corresponded on a one-on-one basis with a specific religious perspective and would hence foster a division of the Dutch population along doctrinal lines. Politically liberal newspapers such as the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* and the *Algemeen Handelsblad* went to the other extreme. In modernist circles, their 'neutral' attitude towards religion was perceived as religious indifference. They did not assess religious convictions and the social relevance of religion at their true

212 V. Hepp, 'Kerkelijk leven – De crisis in den Protestantenvbond', *De Reformatie* III.7 (17 November 1922), 51.

213 E.g.: [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Een misverstand', *De Hervorming*, 1891-06 (7 February 1891), 22-23, here 23; 'Binnenland – Onze koninginnen in Parijs ter kerk', *Ibid.* 1898-17 (23 April 1898), 66.

214 This changed as of the 1900s, as G.J. Heering noticed with satisfaction: "In the last years, the influential [*Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*] explicitly embraced liberal Christian principles, as is shown by its permanent and interesting section with church-related news items." Quoted from: G.J. Heering, 'Een protest', *Ibid.* 1912-41 (12 October 1912), 327-328, here 328.

215 [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Godsdienst en politiek', *Ibid.* 1901-30 (27 July 1901), 233-234, here 233; 1901-31 (3 August 1901), 241-242, here 241.

value.²¹⁶ *De Hervorming* therefore had a complementary function in relation to these newspapers.

When the purchase of *De Hervorming* was discussed at the 1875 NPB assembly, some urged giving the magazine a new name, in which its relation to the NPB would be accentuated. However, the majority did not see any need for that, as the existing name aptly expressed the goal to which the NPB aspired: a reformation of church and society in order for religious life to develop in all freedom.²¹⁷ Next to confessionalism, there were other elements in church and social life that hindered such free development, the suppression of which thus had to be put on the agenda in *De Hervorming* as well.²¹⁸ Creating a sense of urgency among modernists about combatting those 'wrongs', was consequently a third function of the magazine. In *De Hervorming*, accounts were given of modernists' participation in church council elections and in all kinds of initiatives in the sphere of welfare work, to stimulate others to do the same. The magazine was hence not merely a 'mirror' of reality, solely 'reflecting' what was going on in church and society; as parts 2 to 5 of this study make clear, it influenced that reality as well.

The name '*De Hervorming*' had not only a programmatic character, but also an apologetic one. As shown in more detail in chapter 3, orthodox Protestants consistently argued that modernists' negation of Jesus's physical resurrection, refutation of biblical infallibility, and denial of man's innate depravity meant a decisive break with the Christian religion. According to modernist opinion leaders, however, the opposite was true: modernism was in fact a *return* to the essence of Protestantism, indeed to the core of Christianity itself.²¹⁹ The name '*De Hervorming*' reinforced this claim: it was a direct reference to the Reformation, the cradle of Protestantism.²²⁰ The magazine frequently contained

216 [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'De grondslag van het recht bij de liberale partij', *De Hervorming* 1883-22 (2 June 1883), 85-86.

217 *Verslag NPB 1875*, 24.

218 E.g.: W.R. Poolman, 'Ingezonden stukken', *De Hervorming* 1879-01 (4 January 1879), 3-4; H.Ph. de Kanter, 'Twee voorzitters', *Ibid.* 1880-16 (17 April 1880), 61-62; [H.Ph. de Kanter in:] 'Tiende jaarfeest van den Nederlandschen Protestantenvond te Deventer gevierd', *Ibid.* 1880-45 (6 November 1880), 177-179, here 178; H. Vrendenberg Cz., 'De Protestantenvond en de maatschappelijke noden', *Ibid.* 1886-21 (22 May 1886), 81-82, here 82.

219 E.g.: 'Buitenland', *Ibid.* 1874-36 (3 September 1874), 4. This conception would be severely challenged in the Interbellum era. E.g.: D. Drijver, 'Binnenland', *Ibid.* 1930-10 (8 November 1930), 75-76, here 75.

220 At the end of 1874, Mosselmans and Van Gilse explicitly stated this: "our magazine will continue to be called '*De Hervorming*', since we will continue to work in the vein of the church reformers [of the sixteenth-century]." Quoted from: [B.C.J. Mosselmans and J. van Gilse], '31 December 1874 en 1 Januari 1875', *Ibid.* 1874-53 (31 December 1874), 1.

articles in which modernists were portrayed as the true heirs to the sixteenth-century Reformers.²²¹ Doctrinally, the Reformers had held views that were still professed in Protestant orthodoxy and rejected in modernist circles, but the 'canonisation' of their dogmatic views, modernists contended, had never been the Reformers' own intention. The latter's main aim had been to go back to the 'pure' religion of Jesus and to permeate church life and society with the 'pure' spirit of Jesus.²²² Since modernists had exactly the same aspiration, they were depicted in *De Hervorming* as 'more Protestant', and hence 'more Christian', than their orthodox adversaries. Self-justification was thus a fourth function of the magazine.

A fifth function of *De Hervorming* had to do with identity. Having a subscription to the magazine was in itself a meaningful act: it implied that someone felt that he belonged to, or at least sympathised with, the NPB, and hence self-identified as a modernist.²²³ No orthodox Protestant would ever consider taking out a subscription to *De Hervorming*. Moreover, next to being an identity marker, *De Hervorming* was an identity *builder* as well. The magazine discussed what 'modernism' stood or should stand for, and how it could be given shape in church life and social life. *De Hervorming* helped modernists to see what distinguished them from others.²²⁴ It contributed to the creation of an

221 E.g.: [B.C.J. Mosselmans and J. van Gilse], 'Groningen, 29 Oktober 1873', *De Hervorming* 1873-44 (30 October 1873), 1; [J.A. Böhringer in: F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'Feestelijke bijeenkomst ter viering van den vijftien Nederlandschen Protestantendag', *Ibid.* 1877-44 (3 November 1877), 2-3, here 2; 'Adressen aan de synode der Ned. Herv. Kerk', appendix to *Ibid.* 1879-25 (21 June 1879), 101; B.W. Colenbrander, 'Twee lijnrecht tegenover elkaar staande beginselen', *Ibid.* 1896-29 (18 July 1896), 113-114, here 114; [A. Bruining in:] H.U. Meyboom, 'Rede van prof. H.U. Meyboom, gehouden te Leeuwarden 23 Oct. '12', *Ibid.* 1912-44 (2 November 1912), 353-355, here 353. See also: Zaalberg, *De godsdienst van Jezus*, 19; Kuyper, *Het modernisme*, 66, note 25.

222 E.g.: W. Zaalberg, 'Nous Maintiendrons', *De Hervorming* 1875-04 (28 January 1875), 1-3; Melia, 'De missive van het hoofdbestuur der confessionele vereeniging aan de kerkeraden der Nederl. Hervormde Kerk', *Ibid.* 1875-25 (24 June 1875), 3-4; J.F.L. Müller, 'Huichelarij', *Ibid.* 1888-14 (7 April 1888), 53.

223 The editors of *De Hervorming* put this forward repeatedly, for example in the edition of 10 November 1883: 'show that you are well-disposed towards our association [by subscribing to *De Hervorming*]!' Quoted from: [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'Aan de leden van den Ned. Protestantenvbond', *Ibid.* 1883-45 (10 November 1883), 180.

224 Alexis de Tocqueville and Benedict Anderson have extensively dealt with the question of how periodicals contributed to the creation of national identities. See: P. Okker, *Social Stories. The Magazine Novel in Nineteenth-Century America* (Charlottesville and London 2003), 27. Their observations apply to the creation of religious group identities as well.

'invented tradition'.²²⁵ For instance, certain historical individuals were recognised as 'proto-modernists' in *De Hervorming*, because they were said to have had an attitude of mind similar to that of modernists. Probably the most extreme example thereof was the pantheon of 'Protestants' that P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr. presented in an 1898 lecture, referred to in the first chapter, and integrally published in *De Hervorming*. As such, the magazine helped to shape a 'collective memory' in modernist circles and hence offered points of identification in a history that modernists were all said to share.

While *De Hervorming* provided modernists with shared points of identification, it contrariwise also brought dissension into the open, highlighting the presence of factions *within* the modernist movement. In the 1870s, for example, there was a theological controversy between so-called 'ethical' and 'intellectualist' modernists regarding the grounds for religious faith. According to the former, justification of belief in God can ultimately be based neither on rational considerations nor on emotions. The ultimate reason for people to believe in God stems rather from the desire to be freed from the infirmity of human nature, and the need for sanctification, which slumber inside every human being.²²⁶ In the early twentieth century, the modernist movement became internally more diverse, due to the emergence of right-wing modernists, a separately organised group of Dutch Reformed modernists, 'occult-minded' modernists, and socialist modernists, who will be discussed in chapters 3, 4, 5, and 7 respectively. Although they did not hide their own preferences in theological, ecclesial, and social matters, the editors-in-chief of *De Hervorming* gave each and every one of these subgroups within the modernist movement the opportunity to express itself. At the same time, they tried to defuse conflicts, seeking to make sure that discussions would not dissolve into fragmentation. When right-wing modernists, for example, accused old-school modernists of neglecting people's spiritual needs, Van Loenen Martinet and De Lang riposted

225 A term famously coined in: E.J.E. Hobsbawm and T.E. Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge etc. 1983). To quote Hobsbawm, an 'invented tradition' is "taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past." Quoted from: E.J.E. Hobsbawm, 'Introduction: Inventing Traditions', in: *Ibid.*, 1-14, here 1.

226 Roessingh, *Het modernisme in Nederland*, 106-109; J.W. van der Linden, 'De geschiedenis en de beteekenis der "ethische" richting onder de modernen', *De Gids* XLVII.4 (1883), 450-465. In the course of the 1880s, the 'ethical' current within Dutch modernism disintegrated. When J. Hooykaas Herderscheë, one of its most militant advocates, died in 1886, Van Loenen Martinet could write that "ethical modernism, in its original form, has disappeared." Quoted from: [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Johs. Hooykaas Herderscheë', *De Hervorming* 1886-12 (20 March 1886), 46.

that the former were more indebted to the latter than the former were willing to acknowledge.²²⁷ Keeping the peace in a movement as diverse as the modernist one, keeping all modernist 'frogs' in the 'wheelbarrow' that was the NPB, was thus a sixth function of *De Hervorming*.²²⁸

Creating a sense of belonging was a seventh function of *De Hervorming*. The NPB was founded with the intention of being open to all Protestants who shared an aversion to confessionalism, regardless of their theological views. Yet, as explained in the first chapter, it did not manage to get a following outside of the modernist movement. As said in the introduction, modernists were found among various church denominations. The NPB was the central organisation round which they gathered. It furthered feelings of solidarity among them by facilitating encounters across denominational lines, which would, as some hoped, ultimately efface those denominational lines for good.²²⁹ Encounters took place on the local level in NPB branches several times a month, on the national level during general assemblies once every year, and in *De Hervorming* once every week. By reading *De Hervorming*, modernists from all across the Netherlands could 'meet' kindred spirits living elsewhere and become acquainted with the ideas of those others and the activities they organised. As such, *De Hervorming* was the 'paper' equivalent to the NPB branches. In the magazine and in the branches, modernists cultivated and celebrated their communality. Assembling in NPB branches was not only a means to achieve a certain goal, i.e. the advancement of the free development of religious life, but also a purposeful act in itself: it was an expression of sociability.²³⁰ *De Hervorming* was instrumental to this sociability, both within and

227 Van Loenen Martinet tried to substantiate this claim by introducing a new section, called 'Oud-modernen aan het woord' ('Old-School Modernists Speaking'), on 22 April 1911. When Van Loenen Martinet quoted S. Hoekstra in this section in the issue of 27 May 1911, the malcontent Mennonite minister H. Britzel raised an objection: *oude modernen* (first-generation modernists) and *oud-modernen* (old-school modernists) were two distinct categories. Hoekstra's theological views, he argued, differed fundamentally from those identified as 'old-school modernist'. For this reason, the section was renamed 'Onze moderne vaders aan het woord' ('Our Modernist Fathers Speaking'). It was included in *De Hervorming* for the last time in the issue of 20 December 1913.

228 For a short characterisation of 'ethical' and 'intellectual' modernists in the 1870s, 'left-wing' and 'right-wing' modernists from the 1900s onwards, and the role that *De Hervorming* played in discussions among these groups, see: Krijger, 'Een vrijzinnige "meneer"', 49–50.

229 Krijger, 'De organisatorische spin in het vrijzinnige web', 50.

230 In this respect, the NPB resembled the *Maatschappij tot Nut van 't Algemeen*, local 'departments' of which were sometimes involved in the founding of local NPB branches. For similarities between the two organisations, see, e.g.: B. van Gelder and E.G. Hoekstra, *Spoorzoeken in de bonte wereld van geloven en denken* (Amsterdam [1957] 1973), 82.

among branches. The executive board of the national NPB urged branches to take out a collective subscription to the magazine and to organise reading groups in which members could discuss the content of the magazine with each other on a weekly basis.²³¹ *De Hervorming* was in constant need of more subscribers if it was to be issued cost-effectively, but the number of subscribers in itself did not correlate with the total number of people whom it actually reached: in 1891, each copy of *De Hervorming* was said to be read by four or five different individuals, meaning that it was read by 4,000 to 5,000 people respectively each week.²³² *De Hervorming* thus went from hand to hand and brought individuals into contact with each other. Moreover, it offered branches the opportunity to send in reports on lectures, meetings, and festivities taking place in their midst, to inform members of other branches, and hence to instil in those others the feeling of being part of a community that exceeded the local level.²³³

Connected to this last point was an eighth function of *De Hervorming*: it helped to build and sustain an 'imagined community'.²³⁴ By reading *De Hervorming*, a modernist knew himself to be part of a community of individuals with a mentality supposedly similar to his own, most of whom he would never meet in person, but with all of whom he nonetheless felt connected. The magazine was, so to speak, the translocal 'continuation' of the local branches. An NPB branch was small and geographically limited enough to give all of its members the opportunity to meet each other. It was hence a network in which individuals were connected to each other through personal contact. The national NPB, however, was too big to be such a network. It was therefore an *imagined* community. Membership of the NPB was in itself what linked individual

231 E.g.: J.A. Böhringer and J. Bruinwold Riedel, 'Aan de afdeelingsbesturen van den Nederlandschen Protestantenvond', *De Hervorming* 1885-50 (12 December 1885), 197; I. van den Bergh, 'Nederlandsche Protestantenvond – Aan de afdeelingsbesturen en de correspondenten', *Ibid.* 1888-06 (11 February 1888), 22; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Protestantendag te Bolsward', *Ibid.* 1890-45 (8 November 1890), 179; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland', *Ibid.* 1893-02 (14 January 1893), 7; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Naar aanleiding van een opmerking', *Ibid.* 1895-06 (9 February 1895), 23; [H. de Lang], 'Redactioneel – Berichten en mededeelingen', *Ibid.* 1914-39 (26 September 1914), 333; 'Advertentiën', *Ibid.* 1925-43 (24 October 1925), 344.

232 'Binnenland – De algemeene vergadering', *Ibid.* 1891-45 (7 November 1891), 181.

233 Not to everyone's satisfaction. At the beginning of 1914, G.J. Heering strongly advised the new editor-in-chief H. de Lang to change the section with NPB-related messages, because these messages were "hopelessly annoying." Quoted from: G.J. Heering, "De Hervorming hervormd", *Ibid.* 1914-06 (7 February 1914), 45-47, here 47.

234 Krijger, 'De organisatorische spin in het vrijzinnige web', 48-49.

modernists together in an imagined community, but it was *De Hervorming*, together with the annual general assemblies, whereby individuals could actually *experience* being part of that community.²³⁵ While helping to shape the NPB as an imagined community, the magazine itself, as argued in the introductory chapter, gave shape to the modernist movement as a discourse community. It was the main medium through which those who identified as 'modernists' made themselves heard, and as such the 'channel of communication' through which the modernist movement at large was recognisable as a community in the first place.²³⁶

A ninth and last function of *De Hervorming* was closely connected to the concepts of 'invented tradition', 'sociability', and 'imagined community'. In sociology, it is a well-known principle that, in any given group, the threat of a 'common enemy', to which features other than those of the group in question are attributed, intensifies the feeling of togetherness within this group.²³⁷ Accordingly, much attention was paid in *De Hervorming* to orthodox Protestantism. There was a comforting aspect to this as well. In *De Hervorming*, liberal Protestants who were denied the right to hold religious services of their own by the orthodox majorities in their respective congregations learned every week that, elsewhere, others were engaged in exactly the same struggle as they were.²³⁸

235 Fostering and sustaining a collective memory is vital for every imagined community: all of its members need to be able to identify with certain events, figures, narratives and traditions – with certain 'places of memory' or '*lieux de mémoire*' – to experience a sense of belonging. Examples of such places of memory in the imagined community that was the modernist movement are given in: De Baar and Van Dijk (eds.), *Herinnering en identiteit*. Van Weringh argues that magazines as *De Heraut* and *De Standaard* were "indirect social relations" in neo-Calvinist circles, meaning that they were links through which individual neo-Calvinists were connected to other neo-Calvinists, most of whom they did not know in person, in an imagined community. The same goes for *De Hervorming* in modernist circles. See: J. van Weringh, *Het maatschappijbeeld van Abraham Kuypers* (Assen 1967), 2.

236 Paul, 'Religious Discourse Communities', 111–112.

237 Insightful studies dealing with this sociological law are: J.A. Aho, *This Thing of Darkness. A Sociology of the Enemy* (Seattle 1994); D.P. Barash, *Beloved Enemies. Our Need for Opponents* (New York 1994).

238 Krijger, 'De organisatorische spin in het vrijzinnige web', 57.

PART 2

***Modernising Christianity:
Ecclesial-Religious Life***



Modernism, Orthodoxy, and Self-Identification

1 “Chinese in Europe”

In an editorial, published in the Sunday edition of *De Standaard* on 17 November 1872, Abraham Kuyper depicted Protestant modernists as Chinese in Europe. The expression ‘Chinese in Europe’ had been in use since the eighteenth century as a pejorative metaphor, initially used by foreigners visiting Holland, to caricature the faded glory of the then Dutch Republic.¹ Kuyper applied the unfavourable connotations that this expression had to what he saw as the main characteristics of liberal Protestants. Chinese in Europe were an oddity, just as were, in Kuyper’s eyes, modernists in church life. Moreover, the Chinese were renowned for their predilection for the past and their lack of innovation, making them experts in copying methods and techniques from other peoples. Modernists were mimics as well: they had founded equivalents to orthodox Sunday schools, young men’s associations, the *Confessioneele Vereeniging* (i.e. the NPB), orthodox tract societies (i.e. the *Vereeniging tot verspreiding van stichtelijke blaadjes*), and orthodox weeklies (i.e. the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad*). Yet, as Kuyper noticed with satisfaction, none of these copies thrived as much as did the orthodox originals. As Kuyper implied, the modernist movement was just as isolated as China and would meet with the same fate. China had once been a superpower, leading in philosophy and commerce, but had fallen into decay and complacently clung to its past glory. The modernist movement had made headway before 1867, but its progress had been brought to a halt, due to orthodox victories in church council elections, thereafter. Modernists might still think that the future was theirs, but, Kuyper believed, their days as leading theologians and ministers were numbered.²

Three months later, B.A. van Doorn (1811-1895), a liberal-minded deacon in Amsterdam, responded to Kuyper’s editorial. In an article in *De Hervorming*, he stated that he did not quite understand why Kuyper thought the expression ‘Chinese in Europe’ was a well-chosen metaphor in reference to mod-

1 P.J. van Winter, *De Chinezen van Europa* (Groningen 1965); J.L. Blussé, *Tribuut aan China. Vier eeuwen Nederlands-Chinese betrekkingen* (Amsterdam 1989), 8-10.

2 [A. Kuyper], ‘Amsterdam, 15 Nov. 1872’, *Zondagsnummer van De Standaard* 1.34 (17 November 1872), 2.

ernists. After all, in Van Doorn's view, the expression applied more to Kuypers and his orthodox sympathisers than to modernists. As regards a predilection for the past, it was evident to Van Doorn that modernists did not resemble the Chinese at all. On the contrary, while modernists were oriented towards the future, Kuypers and his Kuypersians nostalgically cherished the supposed Calvinist heyday during the Dutch Golden Age. And as far as copying others was concerned, Van Doorn continued, confessionalists such as Kuypers were more experienced in this than their liberal counterparts: they mimicked ultramontane Catholics in everything. The Roman pope had its counterpart in orthodoxy's 'paper pope', i.e. a confession of faith. Confessionalists' missionary festivals, mass open-air manifestations of orthodox zeal,³ were nothing more than a copy of popish processions.⁴ Moreover, their supernaturalistic belief in miracles and their disrespect for individual religious convictions were features with which they aped ultramontanes. These examples could be supplemented with many more, Van Doorn concluded, but they were sufficient to make his point: not modernists, but Kuypersians were the true 'Chinese in Europe'.⁵

Unflattering metaphors such as the one Kuypers used were hurled at modernists from the formative phase of their movement onwards. Orthodox Protestants, Kuypersians and non-Kuypersians alike, claimed to see modernism – both modern theology and the modernist movement – as a negative phenomenon. They usually challenged its Christian character. A classic repudiation of modernism was given by Kuypers in 1871.⁶ Convinced that modernism was a passing and superficial phenomenon, Kuypers referred to it as "a fata morgana," "an attack on Christianity," "completely devoid of reality," "a heresy," "no fruit, but rather the opposite of Protestantism," "self-delusional," "leading to spiritual poverty," "preaching an abstract deity," "praying prayers without depth," and "lacking a true ideal."⁷ Earlier, the orthodox professor J.I. Doedes and the moderate orthodox minister J. Cramer (1833-1895) had blamed modernism for being 'unreal' as well: the former by making a dichotomy between 'modernist' and 'apostolic' Christianity, and the latter by calling modernism an

3 Houkes, *Christelijke vaderlanders*, 103-105, 112-113.

4 Similar comparisons are made in, e.g.: C.P., 'Bibliografisch album – "Het feest te Wolfhezen"', *Het Leeskabinet* XXXI (1864), 233-235, here 235; Houkes, *Christelijke Vaderlanders*, 141.

5 B.A. van Doorn, 'Chineezers in Europa', *De Hervorming* 1873-07 (13 February 1873), 3.

6 For an analysis of the rhetoric and arguments Kuypers used in this lecture, see: A.L. Molendijk, "'A Squeezed Out Lemon Peel'. Abraham Kuypers on Modernism', *Church History and Religious Culture* XCI.3 (2011), 397-413.

7 Kuypers, *Het modernisme*, passim.

illusion.⁸ Modernism was seen as 'unreal' both in the sense that it was not consistent with God's Revelation as set down in the literal word of Scripture and in the sense that it was ill-founded, both in theoretical terms and with regard to its lack of grounding in church life. These characterisations became fixed in the collective memory of Dutch orthodoxy and came to define the way orthodox Protestants generally looked at modernists. After the 1860s and 1870s, they would be repeated many times. As late as 1931, for example, the orthodox Dutch Reformed weekly *De Waarheidsvriend* echoed Cramer by commenting that modernism "gives people a stone for bread [. . .] and has ruined church life,"⁹ while in 1934, the Christian Reformed theologian G. Wisse (1873-1957) repeated Doedes's statement that modernism delusively rejected "the reality of God's holiness."¹⁰ Although not all orthodox denunciations of modernism were as harsh as the ones quoted here, and although, as substantiated below, modernists tried to show that orthodoxy was not completely immune to modernist theological research, the images orthodox Protestants had of the modernist movement were without exception condemnatory.¹¹

Which characterisation of themselves did modernists set against those negative orthodox stereotypes? What was, in other words, their self-image? As explained in the introductory and second chapters, first-generation modernists self-assuredly presented themselves as the standard-bearers of a second Reformation, which would purge the church of all elements reminiscent of an outmoded supernaturalistic worldview and speed up the pace with which society was going towards the ultimate realisation of the Kingdom of God. Yet, saying why contemporary church life and social life were deficient was one thing, devising and bringing about thorough reforms was another. This, as the central argument of this study goes, is what modernists failed to do.

Of course, it is obvious to state that irreconcilable differences of opinions and a weak level of organisation were responsible for this failure, but there

8 J.I. Doedes, *Modern of apostolisch Christendom? Toespraak gehouden bij de aanvang der academische werkzaamheeden na de groote vacantie, den 18ⁿ September 1860* (Utrecht 1860); J. Cramer, *De illusie der moderne richting. Een woord naar aanleiding van de jongsten strijd tusschen prof. J.H. Scholten en dr. A. Pierson* (Amsterdam 1867).

9 J.J. Timmer, 'Moet onze evangelisatiearbeid worden stopgezet?', *De Waarheidsvriend* xxii.33 (17 July 1931), 2.

10 G. Wisse, *Christusprediking bij het modernisme: een critische beschouwing van derzelver aard en motiveering. Rede bij de overdracht van het rectoraat aan de Theologische School der Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk te Apeldoorn, op dinsdag 18 September 1934 gehouden* (Utrecht 1934), 33.

11 In the 1860s and early 1870s, several brochures were published in orthodox circles in which modern theology and the modernist movement were accused of demolishing Christianity. These brochures are listed separately in the bibliography.

was a deeper cause. As this chapter substantiates, there was a structural sense of uncertainty – uncertainty about what the defining characteristics of modernism were – hidden behind the façade of the self-proclaimed ‘second Reformation’. Modernists therefore had difficulty in defining themselves other than as everything their orthodox adversaries were not. However, such characterisations were rather problematic; on the one hand because the dichotomy between modernism and orthodoxy was not as self-evident as it seemed, and on the other hand because a growing number of modernists came to see the image of modernism as a mere negation of orthodoxy as problematic. Why was this so? And why did the term ‘*modern*’ gradually come to be replaced by ‘*vrijzinnig*’? In historiography, this trend has been noticed, but not subjected to an in-depth analysis. Yet, as this chapter argues, it ought to be, as the expectations on the basis of which modernists came to prefer the term ‘*vrijzinnig*’ were not always the same and did not all materialise. Reflecting upon the questions and issues raised here is thus vital to understanding the development of the modernist movement. The way modernists looked at themselves stamped their thoughts and actions, as analysed in chapters 4 and 5, regarding a reform of church life.

2 ‘The True Heirs to the Reformation’

The abovementioned case of Kuyper’s characterisation of liberal Protestants as ‘Chinese in Europe’ is not only interesting in itself, exemplifying the negative stereotypes of modernists circulating in orthodox circles. Van Doorn’s reaction to it further demonstrates in a broader sense two particularities of the way in which modernists generally dealt with antipathetic orthodox stereotypes.

First, in his response to Kuyper, Van Doorn used a rhetorical skill modernists often employed in discussions with orthodoxy: he retorted the charge on the accuser. To Kuyper’s depiction of modernism as a ‘*fata morgana*’, the modernist Reformed minister G. van Gorkom (1833–1905) responded in a similar way. Meticulously refuting every argument Kuyper used to substantiate his claim that modernism was just as illusory as a *fata morgana*, Van Gorkom implied that orthodoxy was in fact the true delusion. Just like Kuyper, he borrowed an Italian term to make his point: Van Gorkom compared Kuyper’s attempt to preserve untenable orthodox articles of faith to a “*salto mortale*.”¹² Someone who

12 G. van Gorkom, ‘Dr. Kuyper en het modernisme’, *Los en Vast* VI (1871), 293–394, here 393. See also: B.R. Evenhuis, *Ook dat was Amsterdam v. De kerk der hervorming in de negentiende eeuw: de strijd voor kerkherstel* (Baarn 1978), 306–307.

performs such a manoeuvre, in this case Kuyper, initially *thinks* he is going to succeed, but will ultimately crash. Hence, he fools himself, just like someone who mistakenly believes that a *fata morgana* is real.

Second, while denying that modernism fitted Kuyper's description, Van Doorn did not specify how modernism should be properly defined. He only *negated* the profile Kuyper sketched. Portraying modernists as 'Chinese in Europe' was wrong, but what kind of image should be set against it? Providing a self-definition proved to be far more arduous, something with which the modernist movement continued to struggle.

When orthodox Protestants tried to define modernists, they commonly defined their own exact opposites. They saw themselves as followers of true belief, while modernists were unbelievers. They tried to build a flourishing church life, whereas modernists demolished it. Although the orthodox used different, more depreciatory terms – 'unbelievers', 'demolishers', etc. –, modernists generally defined themselves as the opposites of orthodoxy as well. Consider, for example, the characterisation that L.W.E. Rauwenhoff gave in 1871 of the movement to which he belonged. Admitting that it was hard to give an adequate description of a movement as diverse as the modernist one, he pictured it as being against conventional theology, against a literal interpretation of Scripture, a reversal of traditional Protestant consciousness, a break with tradition, against the sacramental status of baptism and confirmation, against supernaturalism, and against the old concept of the church as the guardian of a particular confession of faith.¹³ Rauwenhoff thus focused on what modernism was *not*, as other modernists did. W. Zaalberg, to name just one of the latter, could only elucidate the goal of the NPB, the mainstay of the modernist movement, in negative terms. In an 1874 brochure, he explained that the aim of the association of furthering the free development of religious life was supposed to be read as a call to counteract both "Protestant ecclesial orthodoxy" and those "men of letters, aristocrats of the spirit, leading men in our society" who reasoned that every religious faith was a delusion. It was perfectly clear what the NPB was against. However, Zaalberg failed to make clear how the NPB wanted to shape religious life once confessionalism and religious indifference would be defeated – a defeat about which he, and first-generation modernists in general, had no doubt. The modernists assembled in the NPB, he admitted, were only the harbingers of a reformation, not actual reformers. After all, "we do not yet know how to give expression to the

13 L.W.E. Rauwenhoff, *Geschiedenis van het protestantisme* III. *Van het midden der achtentiende eeuw tot op onzen tijd* (Haarlem 1871), 363–381.

words, the form in which free religious life should take a clearly visible, awe-inspiring shape. [...] The men and women who can do that, the reformers of society and church, will stand on our shoulders.”¹⁴ Rauwenhoff and Zaalberg thus acknowledged that at that moment, modernism was merely – and, what is more, could only be – a negation of orthodoxy, as modernists had not yet found the new terms, concepts, rituals, and a new organisation in which the religion of the future could find expression. Yet Rauwenhoff and Zaalberg were convinced that they would eventually succeed in finding these new forms.

Modernists’ negation of orthodoxy not only consisted of refutations of certain conceptions of God and of the idea that the church should adhere to a certain confession of faith. It also entailed a refutation of claims confessionals made regarding their own identity.¹⁵ Contrasting themselves with modernists, orthodox Protestants looked at themselves as *Schriftgetrouw* (‘faithful to Scripture’), accepting as they did that the Bible is about historical facts and hence not challenging its divine inspiration. Modernists, in turn, admitted that they did not regard all biblical texts to be literally true, but that they were in fact, *precisely because of this*, more faithful to Scripture than their orthodox adversaries. As the lectures held in local NPB branches in the 1870s and early 1880s make clear, this modernist counterclaim was one of the most popular topics of conversation. In the NPB branch in Drachten, for instance, the Dutch Reformed minister O. Geerts (1840–1880) argued in 1877 that orthodoxy deluded itself by preserving a false image of Jesus as a miracle worker, whereas modernist theologians shed more light upon who Jesus truly was.¹⁶ A year later, the Mennonite minister I.H. Boeke (1846–1913) exclaimed in Delden that “Jesus without miracles is more magnificent than with miracles,” since (purported) miracles “are obstacles in the way that leads to appreciation of Jesus and of the Scriptures bearing witness to him.”¹⁷ The Dutch Reformed minister H.A. van der Meulen (1847–1929) told his audience in Dokkum in 1880 that modernists had more right to accuse orthodox Protestants of “pulverisation of the Bible” than vice versa. Those who were unwilling to acknowledge that a super-

14 Zaalberg, *De Nederlandsche Protestantenvond*, 4, 6–7, 16.

15 A comparison between modernism and orthodoxy is given in: C. Augustijn, ‘Kerk en godsdienst 1870–1890’, in: Bakker et al. (eds.), *De Doleantie van 1886*, 41–75, here 52–62, 67–68.

16 [O. Geerts in:] ‘Mededeelingen betreffende het Nederlandsch Protestantenvond – Drachten’, *De Hervorming* 1877–11 (17 March 1877), 2.

17 [I.H. Boeke in:] ‘Nederlandsch Protestantenvond – Delden’, *Ibid.* 1878–15 (13 April 1878), 2 [Boeke is erroneously referred to as ‘J.H. Boeke’].

naturalist worldview was no longer tenable, he argued, intentionally rejected the truth.¹⁸ In 1884, to name a last example, the Dutch Reformed minister A.A. van Meurs (1842-1908) similarly contended in the NPB branch of Drimmelen-Geertruidenberg that only those who integrated scientific insights into their faith could really understand biblical texts.¹⁹ Modernists, in sum, felt that a historical-critical approach to the Bible resulted in a 'purer' kind of Christianity and would thereby ultimately end theological quarrels revolving around the question of how Scriptural passages should be interpreted. For them, the Bible did not have meaning because God had supposedly verbally inspired it, but because, and only insofar as, it plucked at their heart strings.²⁰

In the 1880s, however, dissatisfaction with the oppositional character of modernism as the negation of orthodoxy began to increase. Some felt that, now that the NPB had celebrated its tenth anniversary, the time had come for modernists to shift their focus from deconstruction to construction – that is, to actively try to find the new terms, concepts, rituals, and new organisation that would enable modernism, as Rauwenhoff, Zaalberg, and others had prophesied in the 1870s, to develop into the religion of the future.²¹ This proved to be much harder than negating orthodoxy. As chapter 4 indicates, modernists answered the question of how church life should be organised in various

18 [H.A. van der Meulen in:] 'Nederlandsche Protestantenvbond – Dockum', *De Hervorming* 1880-13 (27 March 1880), 50. Van der Meulen gave the same lecture in Rauwerderhem later that year. See: [H.A. van der Meulen in:] 'Nederlandsche Protestantenvbond – Rauwerderhem en omstreken', *Ibid.* 1880-48 (27 November 1880), 190.

19 [A.A. van Meurs in:] 'Nederlandsche Protestantenvbond – Drimmelen-Geertruidenberg', *Ibid.* 1884-09 (1 March 1884), 36.

20 See also: J.G.L. Nolst Trenité, 'Bedenkingen', *Ibid.* 1874-18 (30 April 1874), 2-3, here 3; 'Perskout', *Ibid.* 1874-27 (2 July 1874), 3; W.C. van Manen, 'Misplaatste verbazing', *Ibid.* 1874-47 (19 November 1874), 2; B. Tideman Jz., 'Een goed werk', *Ibid.* 1876-01 (6 January 1876), 2-3; W.C. van Manen, 'Onze leestafel – "Schets van de geschiedenis der Nieuw-Testamentische letterkunde"', *Ibid.* 1877-06 (10 February 1877), 3; E. Snellen, 'Bijbelwaardeering', *Onze Godsdienstpreek* 11.4 (1878), 53-67; 'Vastheid', *De Hervorming* 1881-26 (2 July 1881), 101-102; P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., 'Bijbelwaardeering', *Ibid.* 1883-08 (24 February 1883), 29; E. Snellen, 'Alles is het uwe', *Ibid.* 1884-24 (14 June 1884), 95-96; 'Binnenland – De nieuwe vertaling van het Oude Testament', *Ibid.* 1884-35 (30 August 1884), 140; 'De godzaligheid tot alle dingen nut?', *Ibid.* 1884-50 (13 December 1884), 199.

21 E.g.: 'Vóór den zevenden Protestantendag', *Ibid.* 1879-43 (25 October 1879), 169-170, here 169; [J. van Loenen Martinet in:] 'De openbare vergadering', *Ibid.* 1883-46 (17 November 1883), 182-183; L.W.E. Rauwenhoff, 'Onze leestafel – "Werken en wachten"', *Ibid.* 1883-48 (1 December 1883), 193; J.J. van Hille, 'De moderne richting en de inwendige zending', *Ibid.* 1885-48 (28 November 1885), 190; G.J.D. Mounier, 'Ingezonden stukken', *Ibid.* 1886-34 (21 August 1886), 138; [J.T. Tenthoff in:] 'Nederlandsche Protestantenvbond – Afd. St.-Annaparachie', *Ibid.* 1888-16 (21 April 1888), 62.

ways. There was no such thing as a modernist 'blueprint' for church reform similar to, for example, the detailed Kuyprian reform scheme as set down in the 1883 *Tractaat van de reformatie der kerken* (*Treatise on the Reformation of the Churches*).²²

Moreover, modernists were confronted with a phenomenon that played into the hands of orthodoxy. From the mid-1860s to the early 1880s, growing religious doubt caused several modernist ministers to give up their office. Some of them left the church without distancing themselves from the modernist movement, such as A.G. van Hamel and M.A.N. Rovers in the late 1870s, but most did become entirely estranged from liberal Protestantism. This last category of ministers included A. Pierson and C. Busken Huet, who both resigned in the 1860s, and F. Domela Nieuwenhuis, who left the church in 1879. Orthodox Protestants interpreted departures such as these as a confirmation of their claim that modernism was solely a destructive force, ultimately leading to total unbelief.²³ Modernists were fully aware of this and consequently responded to ministers leaving the church with little sympathy.²⁴ For example, when J.A. Tours (1843-1918), at the time a Dutch Reformed minister in Deventer, decided to resign in 1883, one 'layman' wrote in *De Hervorming* that Kuypier, as the personification of orthodoxy, could claim this as yet another victory in his crusade against modernism. Even when they could no longer believe in the historicity of Jesus, as long as they still shared the high-principled ethics laid down in the Bible, modernist ministers had the moral *duty* to remain at their posts and to continue their resistance against Kuypier's lust for supreme power. In this layman's eyes, Tours was a deserter, a soldier who left the battlefield prematurely.²⁵

Orthodox Protestants substantiated their claim to be the true heirs of Luther, Huldrych Zwingli (1484-1531), and John Calvin (1509-1564) by stressing that they professed the same articles of faith as these theologians had done in the sixteenth century. Nineteenth-century modernist Protestants, on the contrary, claimed the same, albeit justifying their doing so in a different way. In

22 A. Kuypier, *Tractaat van de reformatie der kerken, aan de zonen der Reformatie hier te lande op Luther's vierde eeuwfeest aangeboden* (Amsterdam 1883); Harinck and Winkeler, 'De negentiende eeuw', 695.

23 Buitenwerf-van der Molen, *God van vooruitgang*, 81-82.

24 *Ibid.*, 87-90.

25 Een moderne leek, 'Ingezonden stukken – Dr. J.A. Tours, thans em. predikant, en zijn uittreden als evangeliedienaar der Ned. Hervormde Kerk', *De Hervorming* 1883-21 (26 May 1883), 83. See also: J.A. Tours, 'Ingezonden stukken – Replik', *Ibid.* 1883-22 (2 June 1883), 87-88, here 88; J.A. Tours, *Twee toespraken, ter rechtvaardiging van het nederleggen zijner betrekking* (Deventer 1883).

their eyes, the advance of modernism was the breakthrough of a second Reformation, the completion of the work that the Reformers had started in the sixteenth century. Although the Reformers' thoughts and actions were sometimes reprehensible, modernists, to quote Mosselmans and Van Gilse, felt that they shared the Reformers' inner drive to defend "the imperative needs of the mind and the heart against authority." In an attempt to legitimise their undermining of the misappropriated authority of the Church of Rome, the Reformers had upheld the primacy of Scripture, thereby simply replacing one authority by another. Nonetheless, even though its initiators had in due course recoiled from the ultimate consequence of their own revolt against the restraint of conscience, the Reformation itself had started as a return to the "old Christian ideal, championed by Jesus himself," i.e. the realisation of God's Kingdom on earth. The modernist movement, Mosselmans and Van Gilse emphasised, cherished the same ideal.²⁶

Afterwards, both in *De Hervorming* and NPB meetings, similar statements were repeatedly made.²⁷ All of these were based on the same rationale: a true Protestant does not uncompromisingly adhere to certain customs, formulations, and images, but thinks and acts in the same *spirit* as the sixteenth-century Reformers – that is to say, in the same spirit as *some* of them. In contrast to Luther and Zwingli, Calvin met with considerably less sympathy in the modernist movement. Believing that his conscience forced him to eradicate teachings he considered to be false, Calvin had conducted a genuine reign of terror in Geneva in the mid-sixteenth century. In doing so, he had suppressed the right of every individual to have and express a personal religious conviction. Calvin had therefore not been a *true* advocate of the freedom of conscience, some modernists argued. According to the latter, Calvin had possessed less of the 'Protestant spirit' than other Reformers.²⁸

26 [B.C.J. Mosselmans and J. van Gilse], 'Nieuwjaarsgroet', *De Hervorming* 1873-01 (2 January 1873), 1-2, here 1.

27 E.g.: 'Adressen aan de synode der Ned. Herv. Kerk', appendix to *Ibid.* 1879-25 (21 June 1879), 101; [C. Schwarz], 'Buitenland – De Deutsche Protestantendag te Gotha', *Ibid.* 1880-24 (12 June 1880), 95; [A.J. Oort in:] E. Snellen, 'Erasmus en Luther', *Ibid.* 1880-47 (20 November 1880), 186; J.A. Böhringer, 'Toespraak van den heer J.A. Böhringer in de godsdienstoeffening bij gelegenheid van de Protestantendag te Deventer', *Ibid.* 1889-43 (26 October 1889), 169-170, here 170; H.Y. Groenewegen, 'Rede van dr. H.Y. Groenewegen', *Ibid.* 1894-44 (3 November 1894), 173-174, here 174; B.W. Colenbrander, 'Twee lijnrecht tegenover elkaar staande beginselen', *Ibid.* 1896-29 (18 July 1896), 113-114, here 114.

28 E.g.: E. Snellen, 'Het wezen der Hervorming', *Ibid.* 1880-44 (30 October 1880), 173; J.W.G. van Haarst, 'De modernen en het Lutherfeest', *Ibid.* 1883-41 (13 October 1883), 161-162, here 162; L.W.E. Rauwenhoff, 'Maarten Luther', *Ibid.* 1883-45 (10 November 1883), 177; P.H.

Nineteenth-century modernists considered freedom of conscience to be the core principle of Christianity 'as Jesus of Nazareth intended it'. Since Protestantism had come into existence as a return to this 'pure' Christianity, and since modernism was, in the eyes of its adherents, the truest representative of Protestantism, modernists saw the championing of freedom of conscience as the central and defining element of their movement. However, this claim was problematic for several reasons.

First, 'freedom of conscience' was not seen as the sole principle of modernism, but as one of many 'modernist principles'. What these other 'principles' were remained, however, rather vague. When speakers at NPB meetings or article writers in *De Hervorming* used the term 'modernist principles' – which they frequently did –, they did specify this term and apparently assumed that the people they addressed knew what they meant. Since it was not specified, the expression 'modernist principles' was used as a conceptual frame of reference, with which all modernists could identify. As such, adherence to 'modernist principles' served as a communal identity marker for modernists, while the term itself was, to a large extent, a 'hollow concept', which had to be given concrete meaning by every individual modernist himself.²⁹

Second, upholding freedom of conscience as the core principle of modernism was problematic, given that non-modernists considered this to be one of *their* fundamental principles as well. The same goes for the NPB's aim of advancing the free development of religious life. No non-modernist would claim to be against freedom of conscience or the free development of religious life.

Hughenoltz, Jr., 'Is Luther onze man?', *Ibid.* 1883-45 (10 November 1883), 177-178; 'De Nederlandsche Reformatie', *De Protestant* 1.49 (8 December 1883), 1-2, here 1; 1.50 (15 December 1883), 1-2; A. Kuenen, 'Huldreich Zwingli', *De Hervorming* 1883-52 (29 December 1883), 209; W.C. van Manen, 'Holland en Zwingli', *Ibid.* 1883-52 (29 December 1883), 211-212; S.K. Bakker, 'Wij, calvinisten?', *Ibid.* 1909-29 (17 July 1909), 226-227; C. de Jongh, 'Godsdienstig gemeenschapsleven – Psychologische verklaring van orthodoxie', *Ibid.* 1924-25 (21 June 1924), 195-197, here 196; P.J. Dijkman, "'Of wij niet moeten komen tot een ziel'. Vrijzinnige protestanten en de Reformatie-herdenking van 1917', in: H.J. Paul, B.T. Wallet and G. Harinck (eds.), *De Reformatie-herdenking van 1917. Historische beeldvorming en religieuze identiteitspolitiek in Nederland* (Zoetermeer 2004), 120-139. In 1918, M.C. van Mourik Broekman suggested that modernists' rather unfavourable image of Calvin was partly a reaction to the favourable image of Calvin in orthodox Protestant circles. See: M.C. van Mourik Broekman, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing', *De Hervorming* 1918-45 (9 November 1918), 177-178, here 177.

29 In his biography of Abraham Kuyper, Koch suggests that the term '*gereformeerde beginselen*' ('Reformed principles'), used as a frame of reference and an identity marker in neo-Calvinist circles, was an equally 'hollow concept'. See: Koch, *Abraham Kuyper*, 380-381, 386, 388; H.J. Paul, 'Gereformeerde beginselen', in: Harinck, Paul and Wallet (eds.), *Het gereformeerde geheugen*, 293-305.

On the contrary, Kuyper, to take him yet again as an example, consistently stepped into the breach for the freedom of conscience.³⁰ Whereas modernists' plea for an absolute liberty of conscience went hand in hand with a plea for a 'broad church', Kuyperians stated that *their* conscience forbade them to tolerate liberal religious views or to coexist with liberals within the same church denomination. As long as the Dutch Reformed Church did not stand up against latitudinarianism, their conscience was being violated.³¹ Moreover, in the eyes of the most militantly orthodox Protestants, modernism was not a champion of the liberty of conscience, but rather an infringement thereof.³² Modernism salved people's conscience with 'false' teachings and caused religious doubt, leading people away from true faith. Its presence in church life thus hindered the free development of genuine religious life.³³ Freethinkers made similar comments. According to them, modernists treated the existence of a Supreme Being or of a spiritual realm as a postulate, whereas this 'truth' was no ir-refutable outcome of rational, scientific thinking. Consequently, modernists salved their conscience and hindered the free dissemination of the Truth by propagating their unsubstantiated religious views.³⁴ Leaving the legitimacy of such comments out of account, the mere fact that non-modernists regarded

30 E.g.: A. Kuyper, 'Partijvorming en beginselstrijd', *De Standaard* 1.1 (1 April 1872), 1; A. Kuyper, *Ons program* (Amsterdam [1879] 1880), 84-89; A. Kuyper, *Maranatha. Rede ter inleiding van de deputatenvergadering, gehouden te Utrecht op 12 Mei 1891* (Amsterdam 1891), 15, 19.

31 E.g.: A. Kuyper, "Geworteld en gegrond. " *De kerk als organisme en instituut. Intreërede, uitgesproken in de Nieuwe Kerk te Amsterdam, 10 augustus 1870* (Amsterdam [1870]), 19-21; A. Kuyper, *Het dreigend conflict. Memorie van de gevolmachtigde commissie uit den Amsterdamsche kerkeraad ter voorlichting der gemeente in zake de attesten* (Amsterdam 1886), 9-10; J.J.A. Ploos van Amstel, *De Amsterdamsche kwestie eenvoudig toege-licht* (Leeuwarden 1886), 5-6.

32 E.g.: J.H. Gunning, Jr., 'Advies betreffende den Protestanten-bond', *Stemmen voor Waarheid en Vrede* XIV (1877), 537-557, here 554-556.

33 E.g.: A. Kuyper, *Het modernisme*, 33-39. One of the fiercest opponents of the modernist movement, emphasising the 'devastating' consequences modernism exerted on religious life, was the *Wageningesch Weekblad* (*Wageningen Weekly*). The comments of this magazine's editor, S.H. Buytendijk (1820-1910), were systematically countered in *De Hervorming*.

34 H.U. Meyboom, 'Het doel van het godsdienstonderwijs', *De Hervorming* 1878-22 (1 June 1878), 1-2, here 1; F. Domela Nieuwenhuis, 'De kerk en de vrije gedachte', *De Dageraad* III/1 (1881/1882), 11-13; P.C.F. Frowein, 'Ingezonden stukken – Het bankroet van het modernisme', *Ibid.* 1/1 (1880/1881), 141-144, 154-158; P.C.F. Frowein, 'Een stem uit de Vrije Gemeente', *Ibid.* 1/2 (1880/1881), 54-59; P.C.F. Frowein, 'De vrije gedachte en de Vrije Gemeente te Amsterdam', *Ibid.* v/1 (1883/1884), 382-392, 459-470; H.F.A.P., 'Vrije-Gemeente-eigenaardigheden', *Ibid.* xi (1889-1890), 743-749.

the advocacy of the liberty of conscience as one of their own core values as well made modernists' self-image rather problematic. Nineteenth-century modernists did not recognise this problem, as to them it was clear that while non-modernists might claim to embrace freedom of conscience as a principle, the only ones who truly respected the individual conscience were modernists themselves.³⁵

Third, modernists claimed to be the sole legitimate champions of the freedom of conscience, but it can be questioned whether they themselves stuck to the definition they gave of this principle in all circumstances. How tolerant was it, e.g., to try to change the Dutch Reformed Church in such a way that confessionalists could simply no longer stay in this denomination without harming their consciences?³⁶ In some congregations with a modernist majority, no concessions were made to the orthodox minority. By what justification, modernists stated that they suffered from the same ill-treatment in many orthodox-ruled congregations; they had to act likewise in order to prevent confessionalists from becoming the dominant group in the Dutch Reformed Church as a whole.³⁷ There was something to this, but it can hardly be called a conscientious thing to do. Moreover, although 'freedom of conscience' implies that respect should be paid to all sincere convictions, even to those that seemed absurd or delusional in modernist eyes, some modernists made no effort whatsoever to hide their disgust and contempt for orthodox theology. In 1876, for instance, in a brochure published by the Amsterdam-based, NPB-like organisation *Vereeniging tot bevordering van zelfstandig godsdienstig leven* (Association for the Advancement of Independent Religious Life), it was stated that the modernist movement "is the only true movement in church life."³⁸

35 E.g.: 'Binnenland – Na achtereenvolgens', *De Hervorming* 1874-15 (9 April 1874), 3; [J. van Gilse], 'Met het oog op de aanstaande verkiezingen', *Ibid.* 1875-22 (3 June 1875), 1; I. Hooykaas, 'Een veeg teken', *Ibid.* 1876-16 (20 April 1876), 1-2, here 2; [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'Binnenland – Aanmatiging in de Ned. Herv. Kerk', *Ibid.* 1883-24 (16 June 1883), 94.

36 A question Ph.R. Hugenholtz also raised in early 1875. See: Ph.R. Hugenholtz, 'Het kerkelijk vraagstuk', *Ibid.* 1875-01 (7 January 1875), 1-2.

37 W. Zaalberg, 'Ingezonden stukken', *Ibid.* 1877-15 (14 April 1877), 4; J.W. Liefstinck, Sr., 'Ingezonden stukken', *Ibid.* 1877-17 (28 April 1877), 4; W. Zaalberg, 'Kerkelijke kwestie – Het synodaal verzoek', *Ibid.* 1884-38 (20 September 1884), 152-153, here 153; 'Binnenland – De moderne hervormden te Haarlem', *Ibid.* 1884-39 (27 September 1884), 156; W. Zaalberg, "Hoe kunnen wij op kerkelijk gebied overeenstemming brengen tusschen den plicht van verdraagzaamheid en trouw aan ons beginsel?", *Ibid.* 1885-20 (16 May 1885), 77-78; 1885-21 (23 May 1885), 82-83; A.C. Leendertz, 'Ingezonden stukken – De Bijbel', *Ibid.* 1896-06 (8 February 1896), 24.

38 J.E. Moltzer, *De moderne richting, verdedigd in haar godsdienstig, zedelijk, christelijk en Nederlandsch-hervormd karakter. Eene voorlezing* (Amsterdam 1876), 4.

B.A. van Doorn, who made himself known as the author of this statement in *De Hervorming*, explained that what he meant to say was that a modernist way of being religious “is the only way to worship the Supreme Being with awe, love, and dedication.” In contrast to orthodoxy, Protestant modernism “is the only and hence the true way [...] to restore Jesus’s religion in its original clarity.”³⁹

In the early modernist movement, it was generally believed that orthodoxy would ultimately die out, as it was supposed to be unable to satisfactorily respond to the challenges of the coming age.⁴⁰ This belief suggests that orthodox Protestants were less ‘modern’ than modernists as well as being unconcerned with the preservation of Christianity as a meaningful cultural and social force in the future. This was, however, a false impression. Kuyper, to continue using him for purposes of comparison with the modernists, was not simply staunchly ‘anti-modern’; as said in the introductory chapter, he also wanted to defend Calvinist orthodoxy by bringing it ‘in rapport’ with the present age. This was not just rhetoric; in his neo-Calvinist theology, Kuyper in fact re-defined concepts used by Calvin by drawing upon contemporary scientific and philosophical insights.⁴¹ What is more, neo-Calvinists took full advantage of the opportunities that the modern age offered them. In the Netherlands, they were the first to establish a national, centralised, mass political party in 1879 and made extensive use of mass media.

While neo-Calvinists were thus eager to present themselves as a monolithic bloc by making use of contemporary techniques that allowed them to establish mass organisations of their own, there was a good deal of hesitancy among modernists to join forces institutionally. The first chapter, dealing with the formation and first years of the NPB, has sufficiently shown this. The fear was that an organisation would call for unity in action and would hence pressure

39 B.A. van Doorn, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *De Hervorming* 1876-30 (27 July 1876), 3-4, here 3. See also: B.A. van Doorn, ‘Onfeilbaarheid’, *Ibid.* 1876-28 (13 July 1876), 2-3.

40 E.g.: A.F. Mackensteen, ‘Kroniek’, *Ibid.* 1873-50 (11 December 1873), 1-2, here 1; A. Admiraal, ‘O, gij klein-gelooovigen!’, *Ibid.* 1874-08 (19 February 1874), 1; H.Ph. de Kanter, “Het kerkelijk vraagstuk”, *Ibid.* 1874-17 (23 April 1874), 3-4, here 4; [M.J. Mees in:] ‘Veertiende algemeene vergadering van den Nederl. Protestantenbond’, *Ibid.* 1884-46 (15 November 1884), 183-185, here 185; [J. van Loenen Martinet in:] ‘De 15^e algemeene vergadering’, *Ibid.* 1885-46 (14 November 1885), 181-182, here 182; A.S. Carpentier Altling, *De godsdienst der toekomst* (Leiden 1885), 225-226; F. Pijper, ‘De toekomst der vrijzinnige richting’, *De Hervorming* 1890-01 (4 January 1890), 1-2, here 2.

41 As Harinck argues, “modernism and neo-Calvinism were products of the same cultural context.” Quoted from: G. Harinck, ‘Why Was Bavinck in Need of a Philosophy of Revelation?’, in: J. Bowlin (ed.), *The Kuyper Center Review 11. Revelation and Common Grace* (Grand Rapids 2011), 27-42, here 35.

individuals to sacrifice their own thoughts for the sake of the collective, which would be a violation of freedom of conscience. In an attempt to neutralise this potential threat, a clear distinction was made between a *movement* and a *party*. In *De Hervorming* and at NPB meetings, it was stressed over and over again that modernists formed a *movement* that had no clear boundaries and no goal other than to liberate people from all external pressures that hindered them from acquiring personal convictions about life. In practice, this meant that the modernist movement consisted of all people who identified themselves as 'modernists', regardless of their religious views. When, in 1877, NPB members protested against the membership of someone who claimed to have no religious conviction at all, it was decided that no one should be excluded.⁴² If the person in question regarded himself to be a modernist and consequently wanted to be a member of the NPB, others did not have the right to reject him. As this case demonstrates, the term 'modernist' was not subjected to a thorough content-based reflection at the time. Rather, it was the self-designation of those Protestants who regarded themselves as neither orthodox nor *evangelisch*.

The relationship of the nineteenth-century modernist movement to the *evangelischen* was ambiguous. The *evangelischen* were willing to accept biblical criticism to a certain extent, but they continued to regard the miracles that Jesus the Nazarene is said to have performed in the New Testament as historical facts. Moreover, although he was not pleased with the presence of modernists in the Dutch Reformed Church and even denied modernists' right to be part of it, P. Hofstede de Groot, one of the leading *evangelische* theologians, was against measures to actively expel them.⁴³ Accordingly, orthodox ministers ought to temper their hatred of all who disagreed with their dogmatic convictions. Because of their scruples about modernists' 'desecration' of the Gospel and their abhorrence of orthodox 'bibliolatry', the *evangelischen* presented themselves as moderates, refusing to engage in inner-church con-

42 The person against whose NPB membership objections were raised was H.C.J. Krijthe, who denied the existence of a "personal God who is conscious of his own being." Krijthe would become a nuisance in modernist circles in the 1880s because of the polemical way in which he defended his radically socialist and freethinking sympathies. See: H.C.J. Krijthe, 'Ingezonden stukken', *De Hervorming* 1877-02 (13 January 1877), 3-4; *Verslag NPB* 1877, 18-19; *Verslag NPB* 1879, 26-28; 'H.C.J. Krijthe uit Koevorden', *Morgenrood* 1894-37 (1894), 292-293; L. Buning, 'Krijthe, de vertrouwensman van Domela Nieuwenhuis in Drenthe', *Nieuwe Drentse Volksalmanak* LXXXVI (1968), 28-52, here 37-41; T.E.M. Krijger, 'Een "klein verhaal" over een "groot Verhaal". De kwestie-Krijthe in de NPB (1876-1884)', *Ruimte / Mens & Tijd* 2015-02 (2015), 6-8.

43 P. Hofstede de Groot, *Aan de Nederduitsche Hervormde Gemeente te Groningen. Rekening ter zake van de benoeming van het kiescollege* (Groningen 1867), 10; [P. Hofstede de Groot in:] A.F. Mackenstien, 'Kroniek', *De Hervorming* 1874-19 (7 May 1874), 1-2, here 1.

troversies.⁴⁴ Although the founders of the NPB hoped to make common cause with them in ecclesial matters, as they were just as abhorred by confessionalism as were modernists, the *evangelischen* kept aloof from the NPB, clinging to their principle of impartiality.⁴⁵

In modernist circles, the *evangelische* stance of not taking sides was seen as a sign of weakness.⁴⁶ The *evangelischen* were seen as conservatives *par excellence*, thwarting real reforms and basically ignoring the existence of fundamental theological differences within the Dutch Reformed Church.⁴⁷ It was frequently questioned in *De Hervorming* whether the *evangelischen* were as committed to their 'centre position' as they claimed to be. In particular, their insistence on not formalising the question of doctrinal freedom within the Dutch Reformed Church, but to keep this church 'chained' to an established creed, albeit a confession of faith formulated in such a vague way that everyone could interpret it in whatever way he wanted to, was regarded in modernist circles as a submission to orthodoxy.⁴⁸ Although *evangelischen* and confessionalists shared a belief in the supernatural character of the Gospel, mod-

44 Klooster, *Groninger Godgeleerdheid in Friesland*, 218-220. Yet, Hofstede de Groot denied that the *evangelische* current stood in between the orthodox and the modernist currents; rather, it represented a distinct theological viewpoint and as such had a right to exist not merely as a moderate faction within the Dutch Reformed Church. See: P. Hofstede de Groot, *Iets over de Evangelische Alliantie, welke in Augustus en September 1866 te Amsterdam hare zamenkomsten zal houden* (Groningen 1866), 11.

45 Reitsma, *Geschiedenis van de Hervorming en de Hervormde Kerk der Nederlanden*, 415; [Van den Bergh], *Het werk van den Nederlandschen Protestantenvond*, 4; Herderscheë, *De modern-godsdienstige richting in Nederland*, 296; H.U. Meyboom, *De Nederlandsche Protestantenvond van 1870 tot 1920. Rede, uitgesproken te Utrecht den 26^{sten} October 1920, ter gelegenheid van het gouden feest van den bond* (Groningen [1921]), 5.

46 E.g.: 'Het "Evangelisch Zondagsblad" en de evangelische partij', *De Hervorming* 1877-04 (27 January 1877), 1-2, here 2; [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'De evangelische partij', *Ibid.* 1877-11 (17 March 1877), 1-2, here 2; 'Buitenland – Quia en quatenus', *Ibid.* 1877-16 (21 April 1877), 3-4; Z., 'Ingezonden stukken – Moet eene kerk eene belijdenis hebben?', *Ibid.* 1877-42 (20 October 1877), 3-4, here 3; Q.N., 'De evangelischen en de tuchtroede', *Ibid.* 1883-02 (13 January 1883), 7; A. Kuenen, 'Buitenland – Engeland', *Ibid.* 1883-30 (28 July 1883), 119.

47 E.g.: 'Mededeelingen en berichten', *Ibid.* 1874-04 (22 January 1874), 4; R.T.H.P.L.A. van Boneval Faure, 'Ingezonden stukken', *Ibid.* 1883-35 (1 September 1883), 140.

48 E.g.: 'Mededeelingen en berichten – Binnenland', *Ibid.* 1874-21 (21 May 1874), 3; 'Kroniek', *Ibid.* 1876-37 (14 September 1876), 3; [H.C. Lohr], 'Ingezonden stukken', *Ibid.* 1876-39 (28 September 1876), 2; [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'Kerkelijke kwestie – De synodale vergadering van 1879', *Ibid.* 1879-37 (13 September 1879), 147; R.T.H.P.L.A. van Boneval Faure, 'Kerkelijke kwestie – De kerkelijke reglementen en het recht van het geweten', *Ibid.* 1880-05 (31 January 1880), 19-20, here 19; [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'Binnenland – Het adres der evangelischen aan de synode der N.H. Kerk', *Ibid.* 1883-17 (28 April 1883), 66; C.G. Chavannes, 'De kerkelijke quaestie', *Ibid.* 1884-39 (27 September 1884), 157; [H.U. Meyboom in:], 'De 15^e algemeene vergadering', *Ibid.* 1885-46 (14 November 1885), 181-182, here 181.

ernists could not believe how the former could be so blind as to not see that the latter were their biggest nemeses. As soon as confessionalists would have chased modernists out of the Dutch Reformed Church, they would, it was claimed, turn to the *evangelischen* as their next victims.⁴⁹ Instead of recognising this, the *evangelischen* naively believed that a free-floating middle-of-the-road policy could ultimately settle inner-church quarrels. When, in the course of the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the so-called '*ethisch-orthodoxen*', who accentuated the time-bound character of the biblical texts while also acknowledging that these texts referred to a historical reality, began to take over the role of the *evangelischen* as the Dutch Reformed 'centre faction', modernists accused them of half-heartedness and self-delusion as well.⁵⁰

The images modernists used in the late nineteenth century to characterise themselves were generally self-congratulatory. In their own eyes, modernists were heralds of the coming age, having insights and ideas that others lacked and were unwilling to recognise as true. Using 'light' as a metaphor to refer to the findings of historical-critical biblical studies and cultural trends, A.F. Mackensteen (1842-1875), for example, gave clear expression to this self-perception in *De Hervorming* in 1874. Depicting the Dutch Reformed Church as a three-storey house, with each floor accommodating a specific group, he wrote that only the floor occupied by modernists was fully illuminated. Orthodoxy lived in the windowless basement, into which no light was able to penetrate. The *evangelischen* were situated on the ground floor, which gave them the opportunity to allow as much light as possible into their lives. Yet, referring to their reluctance to read the New Testament in a historical-critical way, Mackensteen wrote that the *evangelischen* kept the curtains on the ground floor closed to prevent the light from entering unrestrictedly. Modernists occupied the first floor. The windows on this floor did not have curtains and were always open.⁵¹ Such a self-congratulatory self-image was not an exclusive characteristic of modernists; confessionalists and the *evangelischen* spoke about themselves in a similar manner. It is, however, important to call attention to

49 E.g.: 'Buitenland – Hannover', *De Hervorming* 1877-01 (6 January 1877), 3; Van Manen, 'De synodale besluiten tegen de gewetensvrijheid', 381; [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'De jongste besluiten der Ned. Herv. synode', *De Hervorming* 1883-37 (15 September 1883), 146-147, here 146.

50 E.g.: I. Hooykaas, 'Het plan eener nieuwe vertaling van het Oude Testament', *Ibid.* 1884-44 (1 November 1884), 175-176, here 176; H. Oort, 'De O. T'sche kritiek en de orthodoxie', *Ibid.* 1892-19 (7 May 1892), 73-74. On the *ethischen*, see: P.W.J.L. Gerretsen, *Vrijzinnig noch rechtzinnig. Daniël Chantepie de la Saussaye (1818-1874) en Jan Hendrik Gerretsen (1867-1923) in de ban van het ethische beginsel* (Gorinchem 2014).

51 A.F. Mackensteen, 'Kroniek', *De Hervorming* 1874-19 (7 May 1874), 1-2, here 1.

it here, since this self-image came to be severely criticised even in modernist circles in the early twentieth century.

3 Criticising Modernist Identity

The dominant modernist self-perception of being the ‘true heirs to the Reformation’, the true champions of the freedom of conscience, and the true religious *illuminati*, gradually lost its appeal to a growing number of liberal Protestants as of the mid-1890s. The speeches given at general NPB assemblies, which serve as annual points of reference for determining the mental state of the Dutch modernist movement, show this clearly. At the 1898 NPB meeting, for instance, P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr. accused his fellow modernists of being “too weak and too half-hearted” to call themselves true ‘Protestants’.⁵² In 1900, L. Knappert, contrasting the present modernist movement with that of ten to thirty years ago, asserted that “we no longer congratulate ourselves as ‘the truest descendants of the Reformation’. We no longer put ourselves, liberal Protestants of the nineteenth century, on a par with Isaiah, Jesus, Paul, Luther, and Lessing.”⁵³ Echoing Hugenholtz and Knappert, J. van Loenen Martinet noted with disappointment in 1904 that the early twentieth-century modernist movement was not bubbling over with ardour and enthusiasm.⁵⁴ Occasionally, echoes of the nineteenth-century modernist self-perception could still be heard in modernist circles. C.J. Niemeijer (1864–1932), to name one prominent example, still jubilantly characterised modernists as the ‘true heirs to the Reformation’ at the NPB assembly of 1913.⁵⁵ However, as these cases indicate, a

52 P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., ‘Ons Allerheiligen’, *De Hervorming* 1898–45 (5 November 1898), 179–180, here 179.

53 L. Knappert, ‘Toespraak, gehouden in de feestelijke godsdienstoefening bij gelegenheid der alg. verg. van den N.P.B. op 31 Oct. 1900’, *Ibid.* 1900–44 (1900–44), 337–339, here 337. Knappert re-uttered the exact same comment at the meeting of 1917. See: [L. Knappert], ‘Openingswoord’, *Ibid.* 1917–49 (8 December 1917), 406–407, here 406.

54 J. van Loenen Martinet, ‘Toespraak, gehouden in de godsdienstoefening bij gelegenheid der algemeene vergadering van den Ned. Protestantenvbond’, *Ibid.* 1904–44 (29 October 1904), 345–347, here 346; J. van Loenen Martinet, ‘Richt op de slappe knieën. . .!’ *Toespraak, gehouden in de vergadering van de Ned. Protestantenvbond* (Assen 1905).

55 C.J. Niemeijer, ‘Verblijdt u! Toespraak van dr. C.J. Niemeijer in de openbare godsdienstoefening te Alkmaar 28 October 1913’, *De Hervorming* 1913–44 (1 November 1913), 345–347, here 346. Three years previously, Niemeijer had already given evidence of the same conviction, by putting forward the old modernist accusation that orthodox Protestantism was no true Protestantism and shared its dogmatism and intolerance with Roman Catholicism. See: C.J. Niemeijer, *Rome en het Protestantisme. Toespraak, gehouden naar aanleiding van de Borromaeus-encycliek* (Bolsward 1910), 15.

different, more modest and less exultant tune came to be sung in the late 1890s and 1900s. This trend even intensified in subsequent decades. In the twentieth century, the self-image modernists had adopted in the previous century was subjected to severe criticism. In consequence, the dichotomy between modernism and orthodoxy, upon which this self-image had been built, came to be seen as no longer self-evident.

The modernist self-image of heralding a second Reformation and finishing the work started by the sixteenth-century Reformers stemmed from the ideal of bridging the gap between Christianity and modern culture. Initially, there was no doubt that the modernist movement would indeed succeed in this; "it might take ages," H.Ph. de Kanter exclaimed in *De Hervorming* in 1874, "but we shall shout victory. [...] The future is ours!"⁵⁶ However, when these hopes and expectations had still not come true after several decades, the self-image inherently connected to these expectations became problematic. As early as the mid-1880s, some modernists thought that the optimism and self-assurance that had accompanied the modernist movement from its earliest phase onwards were unwarranted and naïve.⁵⁷ Afterwards, such feelings increased.⁵⁸ Instead of melting away, orthodoxy became numerically stronger and more powerful every year, culminating in A. Kuypers's appointment as the Dutch prime minister in 1901. In terms of numerical strength and social visibility, the modernist movement clearly lost out to orthodoxy.

The modernist movement was subjected to criticism from within, not only because it had not lived up to initial expectations, but also because it had still not been able to make clear what exactly it stood for. In 1895, for example, the Dutch Reformed minister A. van der Heide (1872-1953) lamented that modernism was still merely a denial of orthodoxy. It had not been able to become anything else.⁵⁹ Such complaints intensified due to the emergence of the so-called

56 H.Ph. de Kanter, "Het kerkelijk vraagstuk", *De Hervorming* 1874-17 (23 April 1874), 3-4, here 4. See also: A. Admiraal, 'O, gij kleingelooovigen!', *Ibid.* 1874-08 (19 February 1874), 1.

57 E.g.: V.H., 'Ik ga visschen', *Ibid.* 1883-32 (11 August 1883), 125; [M.J. Mees in:] 'Veertiende algemeene vergadering van den Nederl. Protestantenvbond', *Ibid.* 1884-46 (15 November 1884), 183-185, here 185; [C.P. Tiele in:] 'Binnenland – Vergadering van moderne theologen', *Ibid.* 1886-19 (8 May 1886), 74-75, here 75; J.A. Böhringer, 'Toespraak in de godsdienstoefening t.g.v. den Protestantendag te Deventer', *Ibid.* 1889-43 (26 October 1889), 169-170, here 169; [A. Bruining in:] 'Binnenland – De vergadering der moderne theologen', *Ibid.* 1890-16 (19 April 1890), 63.

58 E.g.: W. Zaalberg, 'Herinneringen en wenschen', *Ibid.* 1895-45 (9 November 1895), 177-178, here 177; [A. Bruining in:] 'Nederlandsche Protestantenvbond – Afd. Schiedam', *Ibid.* 1897-08 (20 February 1897), 30; B.C.J. Mosselmans, 'Ingezonden stukken – Waarom?', *Ibid.* 1901-43 (26 October 1901), 342; 'De lendenen omgord!', *Ibid.* 1902-01 (4 January 1902), 1-2, here 2.

59 A. van der Heide, 'Aesthetisch waardeeren', *Ibid.* 1895-06 (9 February 1895), 22.

movement of *mystieke jongeren* ('mystical youngsters') around 1895, 'malcontents' in the early 1900s, and 'right-wing modernists' in the 1910s. Although, with regard to theoretical foundations and membership, mystical youngsters, malcontents, and right-wing modernists were not identical, they had the same theological orientation and raised the same grievances against the then modernist mainstream.⁶⁰ There is much more to say about each of these three groups, but here, it is sufficient to analyse the implications that their shared criticism had for the identity of the modernist movement as a whole.⁶¹

In the eyes of mystical youngsters, malcontents, and right-wing modernists, the modernist movement had been preoccupied with the popularisation of anti-orthodox theological views and an anti-confessionalist view of the church. It had been too intellectualistic, focusing on the rational justification of belief in God and hence neglecting the deepest needs of the human soul. Moreover, its optimistic faith in its own invincibility and the innate goodness of mankind had led to blind triumphalism and had reduced Christian religion to a moral code. In modernism, the line between what is human and what is divine had been blurred too much, due to most modernist theologians' monistic outlook on life. Contrasting themselves with first-generation modernists and their present-day disciples, whom they referred to as 'old-school modernists' and who later came to be called 'left-wing modernists', the malcontents believed that there is a distance between God and man that can only be bridged through 'Christ', the unseen force of salvation expressed in the image of Jesus the Nazarene.⁶² On the whole, the malcontents felt that the modernist movement was still only attacking the foundations of church life and Christian faith without unleashing a religious revival.⁶³ The way old-school modernists

60 Roessingh, *Het modernisme in Nederland*, 215-216.

61 An account of the theological nuances within and between the groups of 'malcontents' and 'right-wing modernists', as well as of the reactions their emergence evoked among other modernists, is given in: Van Driel, *Schermen in de schemering*, 130-270.

62 Old-school modernism and left-wing modernism were not entirely identical: the left-wing modernists of the 1920s and 1930s lacked the optimistic belief in progress and human perfectibility that had characterised old-school modernists in the 1900s and 1910s. See: *Ibid.*, 186, note 58.

63 E.g.: J.J. Bleeker, 'Hét Evangelie', *De Hervorming* 1904-32 (6 August 1904), 230-231; V.d.B., 'Leestafel – "Theologisch Tijdschrift"', *Ibid.* 1909-11 (13 March 1909), 85-86, here 86; D.A. Vorster, 'Ingezonden stukken', *Ibid.* 1909-16 (17 April 1909), 126; P.H. Veen, 'Ingezonden stukken', *Ibid.* 1909-30 (24 July 1909), 237; G.J. Heering, 'Ingezonden stukken', *Ibid.* 1910-46 (12 November 1910), 366; G.J. Heering, 'Zonde en schuld', *Ibid.* 1913-07 (15 February 1913), 50-51; [A.S. Carpentier Alting in:] 'Redactioneel – De moderne vergadering', *Ibid.* 1915-17 (24 April 1915), 142-149, here 143; G.J. Heering, 'Hoofdartikelen – "Een van de oude garde"', *Ibid.* 1915-49 (4 December 1915), 442-443; H.A. van Bakel, 'Bondsleven – Vervolgbandel', *Ibid.* 1920-38 (25 September 1920), 150-151; Heering, 'Het vrijzinnig protestantisme op de drempel van een nieuwe tijd', 77-88.

responded to the malcontents made the latter feel misunderstood or even silenced.⁶⁴

Those modernists who denounced the modernist mainstream for what they perceived to be its theologically intellectualistic, optimistic, and monistic character were perfectly aware that their criticism might be seen as a 'return' to orthodoxy, at least as far as their thoughts on sin, grace, and the personal experience of 'Christ' were concerned. However, to their own way of thinking, their criticism was rather the expression of a 'rediscovery' or 'resurgence' of an anti-intellectualistic, anti-monistic undercurrent in modernist theology that had most pronouncedly, albeit briefly, manifested itself as 'ethical modernism' in the 1870s.⁶⁵ As noted in chapter 2, ethical modernists had challenged the blend of Scholten's rationalism – the idea that logic leads to the acknowledgement of God's existence – and Opzoomer's empiricism – the idea that God's existence is confirmed through experience –, which had come to dominate modern theology, by taking up the Mennonite theologian S. Hoekstra's argument that the human need for deliverance from personal imperfection is what makes people believe in God. Ethical modernists had therefore concerned themselves more with the praxis of faith, revolving around the notion of morality, than with theoretical reflections upon faith itself.⁶⁶ However, one of them, I.J. le Cosquino de Bussy (1846-1920), started in the 1880s to focus on notions in Hoekstra's theology that ethical modernism, and modernism in general, had rather neglected: notions such as 'sin' and 'mercy'. Looking back upon the development of modern theology in 1889, De Bussy noted with regret that 'sin' had come to stand for every immoral act or poorly developed moral sense, and 'mercy' for the feeling one gets after showing remorse for committing such an immoral act. According to De Bussy, however, 'sin' and 'mercy' impinge much more deeply upon human existence. People, he believed, are sinful, because they are not inclined to do what is 'good' by nature. 'Sin' was not just an ethical imperfection; it has to do with every human's inclination to shrink back from self-abnegation – meaning that people only want to do good things because, and insofar as, it gives them satisfaction. Doing good things solely because they are good is, however, the highest state of being. That, De

64 G.J. Heering, "De Hervorming" hervormd', *De Hervorming* 1914-06 (7 February 1914), 45-47, here 46-47; [G.J. Heering in:] 'Redactioneel – Nieuwe koers?', *Ibid.* 1914-09 (28 February 1914), 72. See also: Krijger, 'Een vrijzinnige "meneer"', 49-51.

65 H. Faber, *Rechts en links in het vrijzinnig Christendom* (Amsterdam 1937), 7.

66 M.J. van Diggelen, 'Albertus Bruining (1846-1919). Intellectualist tussen oud- en rechts-modernisme', in: J.C.H. Blom (ed.), *Een brandpunt van geleerdheid in de hoofdstad. De Universiteit van Amsterdam rond 1900 in vijftien portretten* (Hilversum 1992), 29-52, here 35.

Bussy argued, is only possible if people are truly one with God. The awareness of this unity with God is 'mercy'.⁶⁷

De Bussy's argument sharply contrasted with the anthropocentric, optimistic sermons that his modernist colleagues delivered. For that reason, the Dutch Reformed minister J.J. Bleeker (1869-1946), a malcontent hardliner, depicted him as the 'father' of malcontentism.⁶⁸ The Mennonite minister H. Britzel (1886-1944), another malcontent, similarly regarded him as an early right-wing modernist – together with S. Cramer, who had evinced his belief in a dualistic relationship between man and God already in 1882, and Hoekstra.⁶⁹ On this basis, Bleeker and Britzel claimed that malcontentism was not a new phenomenon, but rather as old as the modernist movement itself.⁷⁰ Malcontents' self-image as disciples of older modernist dissidents was, with regard to Hoekstra, nonetheless problematic. As mentioned above, Hoekstra had inspired the emergence of 'ethical modernism', which was anti-intellectualistic, but also very moralistic.⁷¹ Moralism was exactly one of the things malcontents disliked in modernism. Only one of Hoekstra's pupils, De Bussy, came to highlight the experience of sin and mercy as the central elements of faith. Others who had been ethical modernists in the 1870s, such as H. Oort and A. Bruining (1846-1919), however, developed in an opposite direction and were among malcontents' fiercest opponents.⁷² There was thus no straight line running from Hoekstra to malcontentism.

Old-school modernists felt that malcontents' criticism was unfair. In their view, theologically dissatisfied modernists failed to recognise the apologetic motives behind the emergence of modern theology and the modernist movement in the mid-nineteenth century. Saying that the first generation of modernists were merely iconoclasts was unjust. Modern theology and the modern-

67 I.J. de Bussy, 'De ontwikkelingsgang van de moderne richting', *De Gids* LIII (1889), 91-135, here 130-134. De Bussy had already criticised modernists' optimistic outlook on life in: I.J. de Bussy, 'De moderne godsdienstprediking', *Bijblad van De Hervorming* 1887-05 (13 July 1887), 65-80.

68 J.J. Bleeker, 'Ingezonden stukken', *De Hervorming* 1905-15 (15 April 1905), 116; J.J. Bleeker, 'Hoofdartikelen – Van onze moderne vaders', *Ibid.* 1917-26 (30 June 1917), 210.

69 In: S. Cramer, *Konservatief modernisme, godgeleerdheid en volksleven* (Leiden 1882); H. Britzel, 'Ingezonden stukken – Professor Hoekstra onder de oud-modernen!?', *De Hervorming* 1911-23 (10 June 1911), 183.

70 See also: G.J. Heering, 'Zonde en schuld', *Ibid.* 1913-05 (1 February 1913), 34-35.

71 Verberne, *Geschiedenis van Nederland* VIII, 63.

72 Van Diggelen, 'Albertus Bruining', 50; R. Kuipers, 'Wetenschap – In memoriam prof. dr. A. Bruining', *Algemeen Handelsblad* XCII.29704 (25 November 1919), evening paper, 9-10, here 10.

ist movement, old-school modernists contended, had emerged out of a feeling that existing hermeneutics, dogmas, and ecclesial practices more and more conflicted with what was going on outside theological faculties and church life. In order to bridge this growing gap between Christian religiosity and the modern era, a new approach to the Bible and a differently-shaped faith community were needed. It was simply impossible to accomplish these goals without intellectualising why certain conceptions of God, interpretations of Scripture, and church regulations were untenable in the first place. What might seem to be a solely intellectualist endeavour, turning reason into the only criterion to decide which beliefs, rituals, and values deserved to be upheld, was thus profoundly motivated by a *cri de cœur* from people who could no longer be satisfied with what conventional theology and church life had to offer them.⁷³

Blaming the earliest modernists, and those who theologically and ecclesiologically still followed in their wake, for ignoring the reality of sin was equally unjust. The central notion in old-school modernist theology was that of the Kingdom of God. As A. Bruining admitted in 1913, the optimistic expectation that individual will power could indeed bring the completion of this Kingdom of God nearer was more strongly developed in old-school modernism than was the sense of sin. But was this a lack, something to lament about? Bruining and others did not think so. In old-school modernism, it was not ignored that Christianity is intrinsically a religion of salvation, but 'sin' was not seen as an obstacle to spiritual development, from which individuals needed to be delivered in order to approach God; instead, old-school modernists took the sinful, imperfect state of the individual as the *starting point* of spiritual development.⁷⁴ Right-wing modernists therefore chided old-school modernists for preaching an ethics of virtue, while themselves neglecting the personal experience of the divine reality that transcends the human mind.

73 E.g.: C.G. Chavannes, 'Mijmeringen v. Intellectualisme', *Teekenen des Tijds* v (1903), 284-303; C.G. Chavannes, 'Óf – óf', *De Hervorming* 1909-01 (2 January 1909), 3-4; W.F. Loman, 'Over intellectualisme', *Ibid.* 1909-20 (15 May 1909), 153-154; H. Oort, 'De betekenis der moderne theologie', *Ibid.* 1914-17 (25 April 1914), 141-143; J. Herderscheë, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Modern en religieus', *Ibid.* 1919-26 (28 June 1919), 111.

74 E.g.: C.G. Chavannes, 'Schuld – zonde – straf', *Teekenen des Tijds* vii (1905), 1-27; D.V., 'Van een oud-moderne', *De Hervorming* 1909-29 (17 July 1909), 227; N.J. Telders, 'Ouden en jongen', *Ibid.* 1909-30 (24 July 1909), 234-235; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, 'Oorzaken van het weinige succes der moderne geloofsprediking', *Ibid.* 1909-41 (9 October 1909), 322-323; P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., 'Zondebewustzijn', *Ibid.* 1910-24 (11 June 1910), 185-186; A. Bruining, 'Oud-modernen en malcontenten', *Ibid.* 1913-01 (4 January 1913), 2-3; M.C. van Wijhe, 'Malcontentisme', *Ibid.* 1913-36 (6 September 1913), 283-284.

Attempting to show that old-school modernism did not disregard emotional life, Van Loenen Martinet, an outspoken old-school modernist himself, introduced a new feature in *De Hervorming* in 1911, in which early modernists' utterances about their innermost religious feelings were cited.⁷⁵ The architect Pl. van den Berg (1863-1944), who did not want to take sides in the theological controversy raging in the modernist movement, did not challenge the qualification of old-school modernist sermons as exclusively 'moralistic', but rather argued that such sermons were needed to evoke indignation over everything that was wrong in society.⁷⁶ Others characterised the malcontents' strong emphasis on sin as a return to the theological position out of which early modernists had freed themselves with much difficulty. Responding to G.J. Heering, who had stated in a rather orthodox-sounding lecture in 1912 that the acknowledgment of one's 'depravity' is a precondition for approaching God, the Sunday school teacher G.A. Hoevers (1869-1941) sighed: "there we are again in the pew of sinners. We need to look at ourselves as deeply wicked creatures again in order to be able to experience the Gospel. And I thought that we were delivered from that nightmare! [I thought] that the Gospel is the good news and the gratifying tiding of God's eternal love and best intentions [...] for all humans in all circumstances of life."⁷⁷ Eight years later, A.H. van der Hoeve also showed himself highly critical of turning sin into the central element of faith. Those who proclaimed that a stronger sense of sin was the ultimate remedy for reanimating religious life, he feared, might easily look down upon others who disagreed.⁷⁸

Nonetheless, old-school modernists were fighting a rearguard action. This is not to say that all modernists came to embrace a more dualistic view on the relationship between God and man, and came to more closely identify the biblical image of Jesus the Nazarene with the eternal force of salvation called 'Christ', but rather that right-wing modernism would set the tone among them in the 1920s and 1930s. The atrocities of the First World War dealt a severe blow to the ethical and cultural optimism that was so characteristic of old-school modernism. The sight of the modernist movement consequently

75 [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Voor hart en leven – Oud-modernen aan het woord', *De Hervorming* 1911-16 (22 April 1911), 126.

76 Pl. van den Berg, 'Ingezonden stukken', *Ibid.* 1909-34 (21 August 1909), 269.

77 Gerarda [G.A. Hoevers], 'Over vakantie en zonde', *Ibid.* 1912-37 (14 September 1912), 291. See also: A.C. van Daalen, 'Ingezonden stukken – De bondsbeginselen in de knel', *Ibid.* 1908-26 (27 June 1908), 206-207; K., 'Berichten, enz. – De "malcontenten"', *Ibid.* 1909-52 (25 December 1909), 413.

78 A.H. van der Hoeve, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Ziele-cultus', *Ibid.* 1920-25 (26 June 1920), 97-98.

changed: theologically speaking, it gave the impression of positioning itself more closely to historical Christianity than beforehand.⁷⁹

Criticism also came to be passed on nineteenth-century modernists' interpretation of the 'freedom of conscience' upon which they had built their self-image. During the 1903 NPB assembly, the Dutch Reformed minister I. van den Bergh (1846-1911) lectured that in modernist circles, 'freedom of conscience' had come to stand for 'neutrality', a tolerant attitude even to those who were condescending about others. In practice, this tolerance often served as a façade behind which modernists could hide doubts about their own identity. Moreover, modernists generally confused respect for opinions other than their own with appreciation or even approval. Instead, they should straightforwardly express that confessionalist intolerance was not something worthy of being tolerated, and should try to eradicate it with more vigour than they had done so far.⁸⁰ The 'neutral' or 'tolerant' *laissez-faire* mentality in which an application of the principle of the freedom of conscience resulted, Van den Bergh continued, had nourished the thought that religion should be kept out of political life.⁸¹ Fearing that an all-too-close entanglement of modernist religiosity and politics would lead to a modernist counterpart of Kuyperianism, the grand majority of liberal Protestants supported liberal politics. However, as dealt with extensively in chapter 9, liberal politicians came to be blamed in modernist circles in the early twentieth century for using the term 'neutrality' as a means to mask their lack of interest in ecclesial and religious matters. The principle of the liberty of conscience as belonging to the core identity of modernists was not questioned as such, but the 'neutral' stance to which it had led did receive an increasing amount of criticism in the first decades of the twentieth century.

In addition, the identity of the NPB came to be criticised as well.⁸² Furthering 'the free development of religious life within and outside the ecclesial domain' might be a formulation with which all modernists could agree,

79 Heering, 'Het vrijzinnig protestantisme op de drempel van een nieuwe tijd', 77-88. In 1917, a certain 'G.H.' even wrote that the modernist movement only had a future if it would cling to the Christian tradition more pronouncedly. See: G.H., 'Heeft de vrijzinnig-godsdienstige richting nog altijd toekomst?', *Teekenen des Tijds* xix (1917), 409-429, here 427.

80 See also: [A. Bruining in:] 'Berichten, enz. – De Dordtsche samenkomsten', *De Hervorming* 1904-46 (12 November 1904), 363-365, here 365.

81 I. van den Bergh, 'Wat ons te doen staat', *Ibid.* 1903-44 (31 October 1903), 316-317.

82 In fact, as becomes clear in chapters 4 to 7, the question of what the NPB should be (that is, which functions it had to fulfil and whom it should accept in its midst) had been under discussion from the founding of the NPB onwards. See also: Krijger, 'De Nederlandse Protestantenvbond: zelfportretten door de jaren heen'.

but it lacked clarity, occasionally leading to controversies. Ultimately, it also lacked the appeal necessary to attract new members. In 1907, even the then NPB chairman B.D. Eerdmans had to admit that it was “not easy to convince people to join an organisation with a goal that many regard as too unclear and not substantial enough.”⁸³ Explaining what the NPB stood for was already difficult in itself, but making concrete how its goal should be realised was even harder. Whenever some NPB members made a proposal for collective action, dissension and even potential disintegration of the NPB came to the surface. The association as a whole did not have a clear profile, other than being the central point of assembly of modernists in the Netherlands. This was no real threat to the viability of the NPB as long as modernists were indeed willing to grant the NPB a central position within their movement. However, as chapter 4 explains, the willingness to do so diminished in the twentieth century.⁸⁴

The depiction of modernism as everything that orthodoxy was not became problematic in the early twentieth century not only due to the emergence of discontentism, but also because it came to be recognised in modernist circles that present-day orthodoxy did not simply stick to age-old doctrines and was even indebted to modern theology. B.D. Eerdmans, the Dutch Reformed minister C. Hille Ris Lambers (1865-1958), and the Mennonite ministers C.B. Hylkema (1870-1948) and A. Binnerts (1865-1932) substantiated this in studies and lectures on neo-Calvinism. Although Hylkema, contrary to Eerdmans, admitted that Calvin's theology and neo-Calvinism were both based on the idea of man's insignificance as opposed to God's omnipotence and thus had a shared fundamental principle,⁸⁵ both Hylkema and Eerdmans felt that particularly the neo-Calvinist vision on the authority of Scripture, and on the relationship between God and man, was completely out of step with the supernatural character of Calvin's theology.⁸⁶ While clothing their ideas in orthodox

83 [B.D. Eerdmans in:] ‘Berichten, enz. – De algemeene vergadering’, *De Hervorming* 1907-43 (26 October 1907), 340-342, here 340.

84 Still in 1954, Boerlage stated that it was not easy to describe the meaning and the aims of the NPB. In religious life, it had “a position that is not immediately clear to everyone,” not even to its executive board, committees and branch management. Quoted from: G.D. Boerlage, *De Nederlandse Protestanten Bond* (The Hague [1954]), 1.

85 C.B. Hylkema, *Oud- en nieuw-calvinisme. Een vergelijkende geschiedkundige studie* (Haarlem 1911), 284-327.

86 *Ibid.*, 35, 46-53; B.D. Eerdmans, “Moderne” orthodoxie of “orthodox” modernisme (Baarn 1911), 7, 15-27. See also: A. Binnerts Sz., *Nieuw-gereformeerde en moderne theologie. Beschouwingen naar aanleiding van de rectorale oratie van prof. Bavinck, ter moderne theologenvergadering voorgedragen en aangevuld met een naschrift* (Baarn 1912), 8; F. Dijkema, ‘De volkstelling’, *De Hervorming* 1911-51 (23 December 1911), 405-406, here 405.

Reformed phraseology, neo-Calvinists in fact rejected Calvin's 'mechanical' view of the biblical authors as dehumanised 'typewriters' and modified or at least tempered Calvin's 'rigid' doctrine of predestination.⁸⁷ Modernist theologians should be given credit for this, as they were the first, to quote Eerdmans, "to have brought the worldview of the modern age into the sphere of theological thinking."⁸⁸ Theologians like Eerdmans and Hylkema therefore felt that the theology of Kuyper, H. Bavinck (1854-1921), and their disciples had rightly come to be known as 'neo-Calvinism', not because, as neo-Calvinists claimed themselves, this theology was a rediscovery and revitalisation of pure Calvinist theology, but rather because it borrowed terms from the Calvinist tradition while giving these a completely new meaning.⁸⁹ It can be questioned whether Eerdmans, Hylkema, Hille Ris Lambers, and Binnerts did full justice to both Calvin and neo-Calvinists, but that is not the issue at stake.⁹⁰ What is important to note here is that they took the differences between sixteenth-century Calvinism and neo-Calvinism to an extreme in an attempt to show that modernists' influence on orthodoxy was much larger than their numerical strength might suggest. They thereby challenged the idea, persistent in both modernist and neo-Calvinist circles, that orthodoxy and modernism were exact opposites.

One clear demonstration of the blurring of the dichotomy between modernism and orthodoxy was that mystical youngsters, malcontents, and right-wing modernists used 'orthodox' terms, such as 'grace', 'sin', and 'regeneration', without reluctance, and identified Jesus the Nazarene more closely with the eternal, ideal 'Christ' than was customary in liberal Protestantism.⁹¹ Old-school modernists blamed them for this. As early as 1895, when the 'movement

87 Hylkema, *Oud- en nieuw-calvinisme*, 22, 142-144, 207, 235, 264-273; Eerdmans, "Moderne" *orthodoxie*, 32-42. See also: C. Hille Ris Lambers, 'Is het Nieuw Calvinisme reactie of vooruitgang?', *Teekenen des Tijds* XIV (1912), 327-352, here 349-350.

88 *Ibid.*, 13.

89 For the refutation of these modernist claims that H. Bavinck, together with Kuyper the spiritual father of neo-Calvinism, gave at the 1912 meeting of modern theologians, see: C. Augustijn, 'Bavinck ter vergadering van moderne theologen 1912', in: C. Augustijn et al., *In rapport met de tijd. 100 jaar theologie aan de Vrije Universiteit* (Kampen 1980), 88-110. See also: H. Bavinck, *Modernisme en orthodoxie* (Kampen [1911]).

90 A detailed overview of the controversy between neo-Calvinists and Eerdmans is given in: C.M. van Driel, *Dienaar van twee heren. Het strijdbaar leven van theoloog-politicus B.D. Eerdmans (1868-1948)* (Kampen 2005), 268-365.

91 Van Driel, *Schermen in de schemering*, 143-149. On 'mystical' tendencies in the modernist movement, see, e.g.: J. de Goederen Wz., 'Ingezonden stukken', *De Hervorming* 1895-21 (25 May 1895), 84; 'Binnenland – Vergadering van moderne predikanten uit de noordelijke provinciën', *Ibid.* 1895-28 (13 July 1895), 110-111, here 111; [A. Bruining in:] 'Van godsdienstige voorstellingen', *Ibid.* 1910-07 (12 February 1910), 49; 'Berichten, enz. – Jezus Christus

of youngsters' was just beginning to germinate, the Remonstrant minister J.A. Beijerman (1849-1932) urged his colleagues at the annual meeting of modernist ministers in the northern provinces not to use orthodox terms. A modernist preacher who turned a deaf ear to his plea, Beijerman warned, would either be mistaken for an orthodox one or not be understood by his modernist audience, which had left behind the supernaturalist realm of thought to which dogmatic terminology referred.⁹² Others repeated this plea and put forward additional reasons why the use of orthodox-sounding vocabulary was problematic, such as a certain 'C.P.' in *De Hervorming* in 1902. Although not rejecting old-fashioned terms outright, this article writer warned modernist ministers who interspersed their sermons with those terms about exposing themselves to three severe risks. First, such preachers might cause confusion, for it was hard to separate a term such as 'sin' from the meaning orthodoxy attached to it. Second, traditional terminology might cause annoyance, as it could remind people of the stuffy orthodox atmosphere that had spiritually suffocated them for so long. Third, a preacher who used orthodox terms might become caught up in his own words, failing to give vent to his inner life in such a way that he edified his audience.⁹³ The Remonstrant minister A.H. Haentjens (1876-1968) experienced that these risks were indeed real in 1905. Because Haentjens did not hesitate to make extensive use of orthodox terminology in his sermons, the church council of his congregation in Haarlem began to suspect that he no longer adhered to a modernist interpretation of faith. Haentjens was forced to resign, but the majority of Haarlem Remonstrants called him back to the pulpit.⁹⁴ He did not belong to the inner circle of malcontents,⁹⁵ but his reinstallation proved that the susceptibility to using orthodox terminology, which

te Barchem', *Ibid.* 1912-38 (21 September 1912), 300; J.J. Bleeker, 'Hoofdartikelen – Modern-godsdienstig en vrijzinnig-christelijk', *Ibid.* 1915-42 (16 October 1915), 369-370, here 370; I.M.J. Hoog, 'In en om de Hervormde Kerk – Ds. H. Bakker tegen evenredige vertegenwoordiging en modus vivendi', *Ibid.* 1916-39 (23 September 1916), 331-332, here 332; W.G. Reddingius, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Mystiek en wereldbeschouwing', *Ibid.* 1924-05 (2 February 1924), 34-35, here 34. See also: Hoenderdaal, 'Het vrijzinnig protestantisme tussen de schaduwen van gisteren en morgen', 175-176.

92 [J.A. Beijerman in:] 'Binnenland – Vergadering van moderne predikanten uit de noordelijke provinciën', *De Hervorming* 1895-29 (20 July 1895), 115.

93 C.P., 'Iets over traditioneele termen', *Ibid.* 1902-41 (11 October 1902), 323-324.

94 [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Berichten, enz. – Haarlem', *Ibid.* 1905-24 (17 June 1905), 188; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Berichten, enz. – De Remonstrantsche Gemeente te Haarlem', *Ibid.* 1905-41 (14 October 1905), 323-324; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Berichten, enz. – Te Haarlem', *Ibid.* 1905-45 (11 November 1905), 357; T.R. Barnard, *Van 'verstoten kind' tot belijdende kerk. De Remonstrantse Broederschap tussen 1850 en 1940* (Amsterdam 2006) 178-184.

95 'Dr. A.H. Haentjens 3 april tachtig jaar', *Haarlems Dagblad* LXX.70 (23 March 1956), 17.

came particularly to the fore in malcontentism, was increasing in modernist circles. Moreover, the turmoil the whole affair caused in the modernist movement laid bare a growing sense of estrangement between critics and defenders of old-school modernism.⁹⁶ Voicing the opinion of the latter, Van Loenen Martinet commented upon Haentjens' reinstallation by calling it the manifestation of "a current in our ecclesial religious life, due to which, according to many, truth and clarity are severely imperilled."⁹⁷ It was perfectly clear that he was drawing a bead on 'malcontentism', without mentioning the word.

Van Loenen Martinet's accusation that the use of orthodox terms lacked clarity was what old-school modernists repeatedly threw in the malcontents' teeth. The latter failed to make clear what they meant when using, for example, the name 'Christ'. As the Walloon Reformed minister C.G. Chavannes (1832-1909) recapitulated in a 1907 article in *Teekenen des Tijds*, 'Christ' did not completely coincide with Jesus the Nazarene in malcontent thinking, but could, on the other hand, not be separated from the historical Jesus either. 'Christ' was no bodiless 'person', but did not merely refer to abstract principles of life either. What then was this mysterious entity called 'Christ'? And why, Chavannes further asked, did malcontents link this 'Christ' together with "the terminology of old religious doctrine," such as 'atonement', 'redemption', 'redeemer', and 'saviour'?⁹⁸ Although it remained unclear to old-school modernists what their malcontent fellow modernists actually believed, it was in any case obvious that the latter did not attach the same meaning to such terms as did orthodox Protestants. While they might consider the Christ they were talking of to be an essential element of one's relationship with God, malcontents still agreed with other modernists that no 'mediator', such as orthodoxy's Jesus Christ, was needed to approach God. Because they borrowed concepts from orthodoxy without accepting the orthodox worldview that was inextricably linked to those concepts, malcontents' vague use of dogmatic vocabulary,

96 Looking ten years back in time, J.J. Bleeker stated in 1915 that malcontents and old-school modernists had clashed so hard in the mid-1900s that a split in the modernist movement had been anything but imaginary. See: J.J. Bleeker, 'Hoofdartikelen – Modern-godsdienstig en vrijzinnig-christelijk', *De Hervorming* 1915-42 (16 October 1915), 369-370, here 370.

97 [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Berichten, enz. – De zaak-Haentjens', *Ibid.* 1905-38 (23 September 1905), 300. Van Loenen Martinet repeated his criticism at the annual NPB meeting of 1909. See: [J. van Loenen Martinet in:] 'Berichten, enz. – De algemeene vergadering', *Ibid.* 1909-47 (20 November 1907), 371-373, here 371; [J. van Loenen Martinet in:] *Handelingen NPB* 1909, 54-63.

98 C.G. Chavannes, 'Mijmeringen XI. Leeft God nog?', *Teekenen des Tijds* IX (1907), 323-334, here 332. See also: P.A. Vis, 'Ingezonden stukken', *De Hervorming* 1907-50 (14 December 1907), 398-399; C.G. Chavannes, 'Gezag', *Ibid.* 1908-32 (8 August 1908), 251-252.

old-school modernists felt, did not simply cause confusion; it was misleading and even insincere.⁹⁹ After all, echoing orthodoxy while holding a modernist worldview could never do full justice to one's inner life. Lamenting that this should be as clear as day to "sensible people," A. Bruining urged ministers to preach in words that "keep pace with the spiritual development of society in general, and hence [to] convey [religion] to every new generation in forms derived from contemporary thinking and in accordance with contemporary insights."¹⁰⁰ Only then would religious life be kept 'fresh', and would religion be prevented from becoming insignificant in social life. Moreover, as the Dutch Reformed minister S.K. Bakker (1875-1918) reminded his fellow modernists in 1909 and 1910, the aim of the modernist movement to modernise Christianity also implied that a new language should be sought, in which religious sentiments could find expression. Not being able to do so was a sign of spiritual poverty.¹⁰¹ Already in 1901, B.C.J. Mosselmans had similarly attacked malcontents by asking: "is the language of the modernist movement poor [in spirit] to such an extent, that we, to express our thoughts and convictions, need to use supernaturalist terminology?"¹⁰²

Malcontents gave an affirmative answer to this question. As L. de Baan and G.J. Heering stated, old-school modernists might say that it was necessary to come up with alternatives for orthodox terminology, but had so far not succeeded in doing this themselves either. There were still no better words than 'sin', 'grace', and 'Christ' to give expression to religious experiences.¹⁰³ Besides,

99 E.g.: P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., 'Ingezonden stukken – Nog eens "de naam van God"', *De Hervorming* 1901-47 (23 November 1901), 373; Censor [A. Carlier], 'Geeoorloofd?', *Ibid.* 1902-04 (25 January 1902), 28; [H.J. Toxopeüs in:] 'Berichten, enz. – De Noord-Hollandse Predikantenvereniging', *Ibid.* 1907-23 (8 June 1907), 180; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'In 't nieuwe jaar', *Ibid.* 1908-03 (18 January 1908), 18-19, here 19; P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., 'Zondebewustzijn', *Ibid.* 1910-24 (11 June 1910), 185-186, here 186; [K. in:] 'Dr. De Sopper en "de God van Nederland"', *Ibid.* 1912-02 (13 January 1912), 11-12; [H. de Lang], 'Redactioneel – Over het gebruikmaken van "orthodoxe" termen', *Ibid.* 1914-11 (14 March 1914), 87; H. Oort, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Onze God', *Ibid.* 1924-09 (1 March 1924), 66-67, here 67; K. Vos, 'De sprekende slang', *Ibid.* 1925-51 (19 December 1925), 402-403, here 403.

100 [A. Bruining in:] 'Berichten, enz. – "Nieuwe wijn in oude lederen zakken"', *Ibid.* 1905-05 (4 February 1905), 37.

101 S.K. Bakker, 'Ingezonden stukken – Armoede? En waaraan?', *Ibid.* 1909-50 (11 December 1909), 397-398; S.K. Bakker, 'Ingezonden stukken – Over "orthodoxe" termen', *Ibid.* 1910-04 (22 January 1910), 30-31.

102 B.C.J. Mosselmans, 'Ingezonden stukken – Vroomheid', *Ibid.* 1901-46 (16 November 1901), 366.

103 G.J. Heering, 'Ingezonden stukken – Het bezigen van "orthodoxe" termen in de godsdienstprediking', *Ibid.* 1909-47 (20 November 1909), 375; L. de Baan, 'Ingezonden stukken – "Jezus Christus te Barchem"', *Ibid.* 1912-39 (28 September 1912), 313.

Heering contended, using those terms was not a sign of conservatism or spiritual poverty – on the contrary, while malcontents were willing to look beyond the opinions and beliefs that had circulated in the early modernist movement, Heering accused old-school modernists of venerating the pioneers of modern theology as sacrosanct religious authorities and basing all their thoughts on this one question: “what would Scholten, what would Kuenen have said about this?”¹⁰⁴

4 Revising Modernist Identity

In malcontent circles, it was not only old-school modernists’ dislike of the old terminology of orthodoxy that was challenged. The term ‘modernist’ itself came to be severely criticised as well. Because ‘modern’ was immediately associated with the monism, intellectualism, and mere negation of orthodoxy against which malcontents vehemently reacted, there was a strong tendency among them to drop the term in favour of the term ‘vrijzinnig’.¹⁰⁵ A loan word from German (*freisinnig*), ‘vrijzinnig’ became naturalised in Dutch around 1830, denoting a liberal or progressive frame of mind in politics and an undogmatic or latitudinarian attitude of mind in a religious and ecclesial context.¹⁰⁶ It was thus an older term than ‘modern’, which, as shown in chapter 1, came to refer to a specific school of thought in theology and a specific group in church life only as late as 1857.

The use of the term ‘vrijzinnig’, as one of its strongest advocates, J.J. Bleeker, explained in 1908, had two advantages compared to the use of ‘modern’. First, ‘vrijzinnig’ lacked the connotation, a negative one in malcontents’ eyes, which the term ‘modern’ had: malcontents “have different sentiments than the older generation of modernists in many respects,” Bleeker argued. “[We] are no longer satisfied with what is called ‘modern’ in the sphere of religious life.”¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ G.J. Heering, ‘Zonde en schuld’, *De Hervorming* 1913-06 (8 February 1913), 43-44, here 43.

¹⁰⁵ Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* 111, 64. As early as 1898, the Lutheran minister J.H.A. Michelsen (1838-1918) suggested renaming the annual meeting of modern theologians into ‘annual meeting of vrijzinnige theologians’, because, as he noticed, the term ‘modern’ had a negative connotation to some. See: [J.H.A. Michelsen in:] ‘Binnenland – Vergadering van moderne theologen’, *De Hervorming* 1898-17 (23 April 1898), 65-66.

¹⁰⁶ M. Siegenbeek, ‘Gemengde taalkundige bedenkingen’, *Taalkundig Magazijn* 1.2 (1837), 175-185, here 179.

¹⁰⁷ J.J. Bleeker, ‘Waarom liever “vrijzinnig” dan “modern”’, *De Hervorming* 1908-48 (28 November 1908), 378-379.

Second, because it had been in use already before the term '*modern*' came into fashion, the term '*vrijzinnig*' enabled malcontents to emphasise that they felt deeply connected, and attached to, the Christian tradition, that is, to Christianity as it had existed before the emergence of the modernist movement. Old-school modernists tended to somewhat downplay the specifically Christian elements in their piety. Particularly among first-generation modernists, the conviction had been strong that at a certain moment in the future, all humans would adhere to the same faith. Although they saw the Christian tradition as superior to other religious traditions and were convinced that a modernised version of this tradition would be at the basis of the religion of the future, old-school modernists found it more important to accentuate that they had a religious faith as such than to make explicit that their faith was rooted in historical Christianity. Consequently, the term '*modern*' was commonly paired with the general adjective '*godsdienstig*' ('religious'). Malcontents, on the other hand, considered being part of the Christian tradition as what defined them as religious beings. Instead of being '*modern-godsdienstig*', they, as Bleeker accentuated,

want [to be] '*Vrijzinnig-Christelijk*' [...] In the past, when we had just escaped from a rather superficial orthodoxy, many in our circles nursed the secret hope that all religions in the world could once be united. At present, the truth that Christianity brings us into a distinctive orbit of feelings and thoughts and gives us a particular view of God, the world, and life is more acknowledged again. And even though the name of Christian has never been relinquished in our circles, it is currently being claimed with more emphasis again.¹⁰⁸

Bleeker later put forward two additional reasons why the term '*modern*' had had its day and two reasons why it should be replaced by '*vrijzinnig-christelijk*' in particular. The formative phase of modernism, he pointed out, had also been its heyday. In the third quarter of the nineteenth century, the term '*modern*' had been the banner under which a spiritless orthodoxy was attacked with much zeal and a revitalisation of church and religious life was enthusiastically pursued. But the late 1900s looked very different from this heyday: by saying that "modernist views were not very new anymore, no longer as liberating to the one, as daring to the other," Bleeker implied that the ideas formed in the formative phase of modernism had never been subjected to

108 J.J. Bleeker, 'Waarom liever "vrijzinnig" dan "modern"', *De Hervorming* 1908-48 (28 November 1908), 378-379, here 379.

a thorough revision afterwards, that old-school modernists had even more or less canonised those ideas, and that the term ‘*modern*’ had hence more and more come to stand for conservatism and a lack of vitality. Moreover, as Bleeker believed, many people who lacked a firm belief in God, but who, for one reason or another, wanted to hide their religious indifference or outright unbelief, had eagerly identified themselves as ‘modernists’. With such a large amount of people who were unwilling to contribute to its development in its midst, the modernist movement would never be able to blossom. Bleeker had no doubt that these “suspicious elements” could be filtered out from the modernist movement if those modernists who did have a firm belief in God would adopt the term ‘*vrijzinnig-christelijk*’. Furthermore, by no longer allowing their orthodox counterparts to claim the adjective ‘Christian’ exclusively for themselves, modernists could demonstrate that it was wrong to consider being Christian as synonymous with being orthodox.¹⁰⁹

Notwithstanding the negative connotation that the adjective ‘*modern*’ had in their circles, malcontents did not reject this term altogether. Although they preferred ‘*vrijzinnig*’, they used the terms ‘*modern*’ and ‘*vrijzinnig*’ interchangeably in practice. Consider, for example, that the current emerging out of their movement, around 1912, was called ‘right-wing modernism’ – not ‘right-wing *vrijzinnigheid*’. Perhaps the term ‘*modern*’ lost some of its negative connotation when it turned out that malcontent thoughts met with a growing response in the modernist movement as a whole in the course of the 1900s and 1910s. Moreover, malcontents stressed that they did not want to break with old-school modernists: they theologised on the basis of the same principles.¹¹⁰ By continuing to use the term ‘*modern*’ next to ‘*vrijzinnig*’, this sense of togetherness found expression. As even Heering, one of the leading men of right-wing modernism, stated in 1912: “I use the terms ‘*modern*’, ‘*vrijzinnig-godsdienstig*’, and ‘*vrijzinnig-christelijk*’ indiscriminately, the first particularly in reference to our theology, the other two in reference to our religious life.” Contrary to the

109 J.J. Bleeker, “Modern of *vrijzinnig-christelijk*?”, *De Hervorming* 1908-51 (19 December 1908), 403-404, here 404. A similar argument was made in: H. Boschma, ‘Kerkelijk leven – Iets over partijnamen’, *De Stroom* v.19 (17 April 1926), 2-3.

110 E.g.: A. Binnerts Sz., ‘Ingezonden stukken – Wat willen de “malcontenten”?’, *De Hervorming* 1904-43 (22 October 1904), 342. In 1908, the suggestion was made at the annual NPB meeting in 1908 to include the term ‘*vrijzinnig-christelijk*’ in the articles of association of the NPB. The suggestion was rejected, in order not to alienate old-school modernists from the NPB. This shows that malcontents were not ready to carry the matter of terminology to such an extreme that the modernist movement would disintegrate. See: I. van den Bergh, ‘Nogmaals art. 1’, *Ibid.* 1908-36 (5 September 1908), 282-283; *Handelingen NPB* 1908, 36-40.

old-school modernist G. de Leeuw (1873–1941), he did not believe that these terms mutually excluded each other.¹¹¹

Malcontents were not the only ones in the modernist movement for whom it was not self-evident that they should label themselves as ‘*modern*’. There were two other groups that should be distinguished from malcontents in which the use of the term ‘*vrijzinnig*’ was encouraged as well. The first of these groups consisted of those members of the Dutch Reformed Church who, as further discussed in chapter 4, organised themselves into local and provincial branches, which, contrary to NPB branches, were not open to members of other church denominations, in the 1900s and early 1910s. They called themselves ‘*vrijzinnig-hervormden*’ and not ‘*modern-hervormden*’, because they considered the term ‘*modern*’ to be ‘besmirched’ in an ecclesial context. Among non-modernist members of the Dutch Reformed Church and the general public, modernists had the reputation of depriving people of their faith and literally preaching them out of the church.¹¹² It was hence seen as basically impossible to exert any appeal on potential new sympathisers under a banner with the word ‘*modern*’ written on it. This was not only the result of a consistent, and very successful, orthodox campaign of slander against modernists; the latter, the initiators of the movement of ‘*vrijzinnig-hervormden*’ felt, were to blame for it themselves as well. For a long time, modernists had been reluctant to organise themselves too tightly – not only in the Dutch Reformed Church, but, as Kuenen’s initial objections against the NPB exemplified, also in general. They did not want to be a separate ‘party’ or ‘faction’, fearing that party discipline would inevitably prevail over individual convictions. For a long time, anti-ecclesial voices, such as Van Loenen Martinet’s, had been nearly unchallenged in the modernist press. Furthermore, the turnout at, and sense of involvement with, church council elections had been consistently lower among modernists than in orthodox circles. As a result, the term ‘*modern*’ had come to stand for an indifferent or even antagonistic attitude towards ecclesial matters. ‘*Modern*’ was, as malcontent Remonstrant Heering also stated in the above quote, first and foremost a theological term, referring to specific hermeneutical and exegetical principles. ‘*Vrijzinnig*’, on the contrary, did not primarily refer to a particular kind of theology, but rather to a commitment to doctrinal freedom within a church framework. Because the

111 G.J. Heering, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Wie vergist zich?’, *De Hervorming* 1912–43 (26 October 1912), 348. See also: G. de Leeuw, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Vrijzinnig christendom en moderne richting’, *Ibid.* 1912–45 (9 November 1912), 368–369.

112 E.g.: Frisius, ‘Binnenland – Uit Friesland’, *De Tijd* 1904–17226 (22 April 1904), 5; ‘Berichten, enz. – Uit “De Westlander”’, *De Hervorming* 1904–43 (22 October 1904), 340.

movement of '*vrijzinnig-hervormden*' did not defend the legitimacy of modernist theological views as such, but rather the legitimacy of adhering to such views in the Dutch Reformed Church, its leaders considered '*vrijzinnig*' a better term in the context of inner-church politics than '*modern*'.¹¹³

The church historian R. Klooster thinks that the inner-church movement of Reformed liberals got the label '*vrijzinnig*' instead of '*modern*' due to a strong malcontent influence.¹¹⁴ This, however, is rather unlikely. The initiator of what ultimately became the *Vereeniging van Vrijzinnige Hervormden in Nederland* (Association of Reformed Liberals in the Netherlands or vvH), C.J. Niemeijer, was anything but malcontent-minded.¹¹⁵ Those who had founded the very first inner-church organisation of Reformed liberals, in Leiden in 1897 – seven years before Niemeijer's founding of the *Vereeniging van Vrijzinnige Hervormden in Friesland* initiated the emergence of local associations of Reformed liberals in municipalities other than Leiden, and two years after the rise of the pre-malcontent movement of 'mystical youngsters' – belonged to the fiercest defenders of old-school modernist theological views as well. These men, among whom were W.C. van Manen and H. Oort, decided to organise themselves separately within the Dutch Reformed community in Leiden, because the local church council had been unwilling to appoint a modernist minister. Cherishing the ideal of the Dutch Reformed Church as *volkskerk*, about which chapter 4 deals in more detail, they did not want to join the local Remonstrant congregation. Entrenching themselves within the NPB was not an option either, due to the fear that the NPB might turn out to function as a stepping stone for Reformed liberals into this Remonstrant congregation.¹¹⁶ The

113 E.g.: C. Boerendonk, 'Ingezonden stukken – Verba valent usu', *De Hervorming* 1912-47 (23 November 1912), 383-384; 'Redactioneel – N.-Hollandsche Predikantenvereeniging', *Ibid.* 1914-29 (18 July 1914), 250; [J.P. Cannegieter in:] H.J. Toxopeüs, 'Rondom de vergadering van moderne theologen', *Ibid.* 1925-18 (1 May 1925), 138-140, here 139. See also: Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III, 92.

114 Klooster, *Het vrijzinnig protestantisme in Nederland*, 57. As Heering stresses, the *vrijzinnig-hervormde* movement emerged and developed independently of the movement of malcontents. See: Heering, 'Het vrijzinnig protestantisme op de drempel van een nieuwe tijd', 85-86. This is not to say that there were no malcontents among the *vrijzinnig-hervormden*.

115 C.J. Niemeijer, 'Kroniek', *Teekenen des Tijds* VI (1904), 413-418; C.J. Niemeijer, 'Kroniek', *Ibid.* XI (1909), 146-165, here 146-163; G.J. Heering, 'Misverstand', *De Hervorming* 1913-11 (15 March 1911), 82-83, here 83.

116 W.C. van Manen, *Wat nu? Aan de vrijzinnige leden der Ned. Herv. gemeente te Leiden: een voorstel* (Leiden 1897); [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Leiden', *De Hervorming* 1897-43 (23 October 1897), 170; W.C. van Manen, 'Een eigen kring', *Ibid.* 1897-44 (30 October 1897), 174; 'Binnenland – Uit Leiden', *Ibid.* 1897-44 (30 October 1897), 175; H.G. Hagen, *Mijne verhouding tot de vrijzinnige hervormden te Leiden* (Leiden 1899); K.M. Witteveen,

separate liberal Reformed organisation in Leiden probably received the name 'vrijzinnig' instead of 'modern', because the former had a more explicitly ecclesial connotation. Its creation established a precedent for Niemeijer; the first Reformed modernists who organised themselves separately adopted the name 'vrijzinnig' and he, who wanted modernist members of the Dutch Reformed Church in the entire country to do what these modernists in Leiden had done in 1897, followed them in this.

When the *evangelische* theologian J. Offerhaus (1831-1926) asked him in 1904 why he labelled his movement of Reformed liberals 'vrijzinnig', Niemeijer answered that this adjective was 'broader' than 'modern'. In contradiction to this answer, he stressed that the *Vereeniging van Vrijzinnige Hervormden in Friesland* was meant to include modernists, not *evangelischen* and *ethisch-hervormden*.¹¹⁷ In Friesland, he and one of his sympathisers noted, modernists were the only ones who upheld the principle of doctrinal freedom and hence the only ones who truly deserved the honorable title 'vrijzinnig'.¹¹⁸ However, as the term 'vrijzinnig' was broader than 'modern', it did leave open the possibility of accepting non-modernists into the *vrijzinnig-hervormde* movement. B.D. Eerdmans straightforwardly admitted this during a meeting of Reformed liberals in The Hague in 1905.¹¹⁹ Outside of Friesland, some provincial associations of *vrijzinnig-hervormden* did indeed include the *evangelischen*.¹²⁰

The argument that the term 'vrijzinnig' could, contrary to 'modern', be interpreted as broad enough to also include *evangelischen* and *ethisch-orthodoxen*

'Honderd jaar Vrijzinnig Hervormd in Leiden', in: K.P. Baljon-van den Ende et al., *Honderd jaar vrijzinnigheid in het Leidse. Jubileumuitgave bij het eeuwfeest van de Vereniging van Vrijzinnige Hervormden Leiden/Oegstgeest* (Leiden and Oegstgeest 1998), 9-85, here 15-20.

117 J. van Loenen Martinet noticed this contradiction as well. See: [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Berichten, enz. – Tweeërlei bezwaar', *De Hervorming* 1904-18 (30 April 1904), 141.

118 C.J. Niemeijer, 'Kroniek', *Teekenen des Tijds* VI (1904), 91-108, here 98-99; B., 'Ingezonden stukken – De vrijzinnigen in Friesland', *De Hervorming* 1904-29 (11 June 1904), 189; C.J. Niemeijer, 'Kroniek', *Teekenen des Tijds* VIII (1906), 223-239, here 227-237. See also: K.A. Beversluis, *Een halve eeuw strijd en opbouw. Ontstaan en ontwikkeling van de vrijzinnig hervormde beweging* (Assen 1953), 49-50; Jansen, "'Teekenen des Tijds'", 19.

119 'Kerknieuws', *Het Nieuws van den Dag* 1905-10990 (28 October 1905), 13. See also: I. van den Bergh, 'Vrijzinnig christendom', *De Hervorming* 1909-49 (4 December 1909), 385-386; "'Vrijzinnig'", *Algemeen Handelsblad* LXXXIX.28301 (11 January 1916), evening paper, 6; 'Vereeniging van Vrijzinnige Hervormden', *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden* XXXIX.271 (17 November 1926), 9; 'De positie der evangelischen', *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* LXXXVI.270 (29 September 1929), morning paper C, 2.

120 In any case in the provinces of South Holland, Overijssel, Drenthe, Groningen, and North Brabant/Limburg. See: C. Hille Ris Lambers, 'Ingezonden stukken – Overdreven bezwaren', *De Hervorming* 1909-50 (11 December 1909), 398-399, here 398; Beversluis, *Een halve eeuw strijd en opbouw*, 50-55.

was the incentive for a third group within the modernist movement, alongside the malcontents and *vrijzinnig-hervormden*, to embrace it. This group, centred around the so-called ‘*Eenheidsbeweging*’ (‘Unity Movement’) in the early 1910s, and referred to by the adjective ‘*algemeen-vrijzinnig*’ as of the mid-1910s, tried to overcome existing factional dividing lines based on theological differences by bringing about a supra-factional community spirit based on a shared sense of piety. Though malcontents were also seeking rapprochement with *evangelischen* and *ethisch-orthodoxen*, this group should be distinguished from malcontents, as the latter’s theological views were not generally accepted among those modernists who belonged to it.¹²¹ If he could be called a ‘malcontent’ at all, G.H. van Senden, the most prominent representative of this group of modernists, was, theologically speaking, definitely a loner in malcontent circles.¹²² The initiator of the *Eenheidsbeweging* was not Van Senden, but his fellow Dutch Reformed minister M. Beversluis (1856-1948). The fact that Beversluis counted himself among the *evangelischen* indicates that the attempt at cross-factional conciliation was not solely a modernist endeavour. In a 1910 lecture, Beversluis argued that the rigid distinction among modernists, *evangelischen*, and *ethisch-orthodoxen* was out of date and misleading. Out of date, because fundamental differences had emerged *within* each of these three factions, while the theological differences that had led to the formation of these factions no longer applied entirely. Misleading, because the factional division caused right-wing modernists, *evangelischen*, and left-wing *ethischen* to neither acknowledge their similarity nor appreciate each other’s intentions. Beversluis therefore advocated the creation of an ecclesial centre party, “standing against strict confessionalism on the right, against cold naturalism on the left.”¹²³ At a meeting Beversluis convened in April 1911 to effectuate this plan, the majority of the persons present nonetheless opposed him, feeling that such a centre party would serve no purpose and could not

121 ‘Redactioneel – Algemeen vrijzinnig’, *De Hervorming* 1916-28 (8 July 1916), 236-237; ‘Kerknieuws – Algemeen vrijzinnig’, *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* LXXIII.186 (4 July 1916), morning paper A, 3.

122 He even explicitly criticised malcontents in: G.H. van Senden, *Het vraagstuk van rechtzinnigheid en vrijzinnigheid* (Baarn 1912). C.E. Hooykaas nonetheless included him among the malcontents. See: C.E. Hooykaas, ‘Godsdienstig leven in Nederland LII. Partijverhoudingen’, *Algemeen Handelsblad* LXXXV.27029 (13 July 1912), evening paper, 9.

123 M. Beversluis, *De onzuiverheid der hedendaagsche partijverhoudingen op godsdienstig gebied. Voordracht, gehouden in de Predikanten-Vergadering te Groningen, op 27 september 1910* (Groningen 1910), 8, 37. See also: [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Berichten, enz. – Een centrumpartij’, *De Hervorming* 1911-07 (18 February 1911), 51.

exist without a greater underlying theological consensus.¹²⁴ They did want to increase the sense of togetherness among the different factions, for the pursuit of which an *algemeene predikantenvergadering* (general meeting of ministers) was called into being. As Beversluis disqualified himself by continuing to argue for party formation,¹²⁵ Van Senden set himself up as the new leader of the *Eenheidsbeweging*.

The Mennonite minister M. Huizinga, Jr. (1876-1959) characterised the principle on which the *Eenheidsbeweging* was founded as '*vrijzinnig*': the movement was only open to people who acknowledged that every theological statement is nothing more than a subjective expression of the experience of God, and who accordingly recognised that true piety does not depend on adherence to certain dogmas.¹²⁶ Contrary to malcontents, whose '*vrijzinnigheid*' was basically modernism expressed in traditional Christian terms, and men such as Niemeijer, for whom '*vrijzinnig*' had an inherently ecclesial connotation, Huizinga thus argued that being '*vrijzinnig*' ultimately came down to having the attitude he described above. Van Senden stated his agreement with this. When he failed to attract more sympathisers for the *Eenheidsbeweging*, which was, as far as his fellow modernists were concerned, particularly due to the scathing judgment he passed on the modernist movement in a 1912 brochure, Van Senden began to present himself as '*algemeen-vrijzinnig*'. With this term, he meant to express that, although fully accepting modernist hermeneutical principles, he felt connected to everyone in whose faith some of his own piety shined through. He therefore could not unconditionally support the modernist movement as a whole; he could only sympathise with individual modernists insofar as their piety resembled his.¹²⁷ *Algemeen-vrijzinnigen*, as one of Van Senden's supporters further explained, open-mindedly listened to others' testimonies of faith, regardless of the times these others lived in, the concepts of God they had, or even the religious traditions they belonged to. An *algemeen-vrijzinnige* looked beyond Puritans', Roman Catholics', and non-Christians' *conceptions* of God and focused on their *experiences* of the divine. *Vrijzinnigheid* was an attitude of mind, manifesting itself in religious life, in

124 M. Huizinga, Jr., 'De "Eenheidsbeweging"', *De Hervorming* 1911-50 (16 December 1911), 397-398; 1911-52 (30 December 1911), 415-416; M. Huizinga, Jr., *Toch eenheid! Mijn voorstel aan de vergadering der zoogenaamde Eenheids-beweging* (Groningen 1912), 6-13.

125 As expressed in: M. Beversluis, *De Eenheidsbeweging. Open brief aan alle predikanten* (Groningen 1912).

126 M. Huizinga, Jr., 'De "Eenheidsbeweging"', *De Hervorming* 1911-52 (30 December 1911), 415-416, here 415.

127 Van Senden, *Het vraagstuk van rechtzinnigheid en vrijzinnigheid*; [G.H. van Senden in:] 'Berichten, enz. – Dr. Van Senden's brochure', *De Hervorming* 1912-30 (27 July 1912), 235.

the broadest sense, through the ages. Those who possessed this attitude of mind immediately recognised it when they came across someone else, either a historical figure or a contemporary, who possessed it as well. Confessionalists certainly lacked it, but many modernists did too.¹²⁸

Modernists who identified neither with malcontents, nor with the *vrijzinnig-hervormde* current, nor with Van Senden's *algemeen-vrijzinnigen*, were sceptical about the growing use of the term '*vrijzinnig*' in their circles. To someone such as Bleeker, they responded that if he and his fellow malcontents did not want to leave the modernist movement, there was no reason to favour the use of the term '*vrijzinnig*'. While this adjective was meaningless in itself, even in combination with the word '*christelijk*', since it could apply to basically any Protestant with a liberal, non-confessionalist frame of mind, the term '*modern*' only applied to those who had an anti-supernatural outlook on life, among whom malcontents still counted themselves.¹²⁹ To men such as Niemeijer, modernists preferring the term '*modern*' replied that they did not understand why '*vrijzinnig*' was chosen as the label for an inner-church organisation that was originally exclusively, and later primarily, meant to target modernists. Was it not confusing not to call a spade simply a spade?¹³⁰ And to Van Senden and his sympathisers, modernists cherishing the adjective '*modern*' argued that they did not differ as much from the *algemeen-vrijzinnigen* as the latter believed.¹³¹ As some of these modernists implied, they were not inclined to replace the term '*modern*' because they understood that such a replacement would mark the definitive death of the grand idea and expectations associated with this term. '*Modern*' was the banner under which fierce battles against orthodoxy had been waged and the synonymy between being religious and going to church had been challenged; it stood for a dedication to modernising Christianity and the conviction that the principles of this modern-

128 'Kerknieuws – Algemeen vrijzinnig', *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* LXXIII.186 (4 July 1916), morning paper A, 3. See also: 'Redactioneel – Algemeen vrijzinnig', *De Hervorming* 1916-28 (8 July 1916), 236-237, here 237.

129 E.g.: 'Berichten, enz. – Vrijzinnig of modern?', *Ibid.* 1907-17 (27 April 1907), 132; L.N. de Jong, 'Waar moet de grens getrokken worden?', *Ibid.* 1908-22 (30 May 1908), 170; I. van den Bergh, 'Modern of vrijzinnig-christelijk?', *Ibid.* 1908-49 (5 December 1908), 387-388, here 387; C.G. Chavannes, 'Óf – óf', *Ibid.* 1909-01 (2 January 1909), 3-4, here 4.

130 E.g.: [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Berichten, enz. – Tweeërlei bezwaar', *Ibid.* 1904-18 (30 April 1904), 141; "Vrijzinnig", *Algemeen Handelsblad* LXXXIX.28301 (11 January 1916), evening paper, 6.

131 E.g.: [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Berichten, enz. – Dr. Van Senden's brochure en "de moderne vaderen"', *De Hervorming* 1912-31 (3 August 1912), 243-244; [H. de Lang], 'Redactioneel – Gemeenten en predikanten, die niet bij elkaar passen', *Ibid.* 1917-24 (16 June 1917), 196-197, here 196.

ised Christianity would eventually permeate all of religious and social life.¹³² The criticism of those groups within the modernist movement that referred to themselves as ‘*vrijzinnig*’ was directed precisely against this antithetical attitude towards orthodoxy, ambiguous relation to the church, pretension, and triumphalism that the term ‘*modern*’ connoted. For those sticking to this term, on the other hand, the elements contained in it had a positive connotation, reminding them of the glorious emergence of modernism in the mid-nineteenth century and inspiring them to keep to the path that the earliest modernists had laid out.¹³³

Nonetheless, the term ‘*vrijzinnig*’ did find more and more acceptance throughout the whole of the modernist movement in the 1900s and 1910s, showing that the groups favouring this term increased in importance. Moreover, in spite of its broader meaning, it had basically become completely synonymous with ‘*modern*’ in an ecclesial and theological context in the late 1910s – by then, both terms were used interchangeably in the modernist movement, with ‘*vrijzinnig*’ being used more often.¹³⁴ This shows that the term ‘*vrijzinnig*’ did not catch on among *evangelischen*, with the exception of those who joined the ranks of the *vrijzinnig-hervormde* current, and *ethisch-orthodoxen*. R.H. Drijber (1850-1939), the editor-in-chief of the *Evangelisch Zondagsblad* and chairman of the *Nederlandsche Evangelische Vereeniging*, urged his fellow *evangelischen* in 1916 to call themselves ‘*vrijzinnig*’ only in reference to their rejection of a strict enforcement of the Three Forms of Unity in the Dutch Reformed Church, but not in any other context.¹³⁵ For the *evangelischen*, it was out of the question to entirely drop the existing factional nomenclature and unconditionally present themselves under a common label with

¹³² P. Smits, *De identiteitsimpasse van het vrijzinnig protestantisme. Oorzaken en consequenties* (Kampen 1989), 16.

¹³³ E.g.: [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Berichten, enz. – De vergadering van vrijzinnigen’, *De Hervorming* 1908-19 (9 May 1908), 148; I. van den Bergh, ‘Modern of vrijzinnig-christelijk?’, *Ibid.* 1908-49 (5 December 1908), 387-388, here 387; H.U. Meyboom, ‘Modern-godsdienstig’ en ‘vrijzinnig-christelijk’, *Teekenen des Tijds* XVII (1915), 379-404; A. Bruining, ‘Hoofdartikelen – Het modernisme en de *modus vivendi*’, *De Hervorming* 1916-35 (26 August 1916), 298.

¹³⁴ J.J. Bleeker, ‘Waarom liever “vrijzinnig” dan “modern”’, *Ibid.* 1908-48 (28 November 1908), 378-379, here 378; C.E. Hooykaas, ‘Godsdienstig leven in Nederland I. Orthodox en modern’, *Algemeen Handelsblad* LXXXIII.26425 (9 November 1910), evening paper, 9; M. Beversluis, ‘Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Het positieve element in de vrijzinnigheid’, *De Hervorming* 1919-11 (15 March 1919), 41; 1919-12 (22 March 1919), 45-46.

¹³⁵ “Vrijzinnig”, *Algemeen Handelsblad* LXXXIX.28301 (11 January 1916), evening paper, 6. The *evangelische* minister B. Klein Wassink (1874-1946) had made a similar plea in 1911. See: ‘Uit het kerkelijk leven – De evangelischen’, *De Waarheidsvriend* 11.13 (24 February 1911), 2.

modernists, abhorrent as they were to the latter's anti-supernatural outlook on Jesus the Nazarene. The *ethischen* would never even refer to themselves as 'vrijzinnig' in any context. Although they were just as much attacked by the guardians of the Three Forms of Unity as were modernists and the *evangelischen*, and thus had ecclesial interests in common with these groups, they continued to see themselves as orthodox and did not want to give the impression of tolerating modernist views in the Dutch Reformed Church.

The increasing use of the term 'vrijzinnig' among modernists, and only among them, also suggests something else. It was not a coincidence that this trend occurred when, as analysed in chapter 2, a growing feeling of being marginalised manifested itself in the modernist movement. In reaction to this, some modernist opinion makers admitted that modernists' direct influence on religious life might be limited, but boasted that their *indirect* influence was in fact considerable. Time and again these opinion leaders emphasised that, although these groups were unwilling to admit it, the *evangelischen* and *ethischen* had integrated a good deal of modernist ideas into their theology – even to such an extent that, though their interpretations and images of the divine might be different from those of modernists, it was legitimate to claim that they fell under the latter's sphere of influence.¹³⁶ These opinion leaders promoted the conviction in modernist circles that modernists proper, *evangelischen*, and *ethischen* essentially all belonged to one and the same current, the name of which, 'vrijzinnig', should be preferred over the old factional names.¹³⁷

As noted, one of the reasons for *vrijzinnig-hervormden* not to label their movement as 'modernist' had to do with the anti-ecclesial connotation this word had. An increasing appreciation of the institution of the church in modernist circles, a trend for which the term 'ecclesial turn' was coined in chapter 2, was, however, not restricted to the *vrijzinnig-hervormden*. Compared to old-school modernists, malcontents attached greater value to the ecclesial character of Christianity. And although the *algemeen-vrijzinnigen* questioned

136 E.g.: C. Hille Ris Lambers, 'Hoe lang hinkt gij nog op twee gedachten?', *De Hervorming* 1905-42 (21 October 1905), 331-332; A. Bruining, 'Berichten, enz. – Een zich vormende legende', *Ibid.* 1906-28 (14 July 1906), 221; H.A. van Bakel, *Ethische orthodoxie en modernisme* (Amersfoort 1907), 27; C. Boerendonk, 'Ingezonden stukken – Verba valent usu', *De Hervorming* 1912-46 (16 November 1912), 377; M. Beversluis, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Het positieve element in de vrijzinnigheid', *Ibid.* 1919-11 (15 March 1919), 41; 1919-12 (22 March 1919), 45-46; G.A. van der Giesen, 'Ingezonden – Samenwerking van vrijzinnigen en ethischen', *Ibid.* 1922-05 (4 February 1922), 38; J. Koekebakker, 'De enquête over gemeentelieven', *Ibid.* 1926-05 (30 January 1926), 33-35, here 33.

137 E.g.: A. Rutgers van der Loeff, 'De ethische richting', *Teekenen des Tijds* XIV (1912), 247-277; 'Kerknieuws – Het minderwaardigheidsgevoel der modernen', *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* LXXXII.29 (29 January 1925), evening paper A, 1.

whether the church would still have a central position in religious life in the future, they, as one of them stressed, in any case expected much more for the development of religious life from the Dutch Reformed Church in its current, multicoloured shape, than from a disintegration of this same church along existing factional lines or from any other church community. Because they also felt congenial towards non-modernists, the *algemeen-vrijzinnigen* did not like the prospect of being in a church community solely, or largely, consisting of the latter, such as a potential Liberal Reformed Church or one of the smaller, already existing Protestant churches.¹³⁸ According to Niemeijer, the resurgent ecclesial consciousness in modernist Reformed circles in the early twentieth century was fuelled by the perception that Remonstrants, Mennonites, and Lutherans seemed to care more about the numerical growth of their own churches than about the strengthening of liberal Protestantism as an influence in social life as such.¹³⁹ Chapter 4 focuses on this matter in more detail. Here it is sufficient to note that, coinciding with, and connected to, Reformed modernists' growing focus on their own church denomination, ecclesial consciousness did indeed intensify among non-Reformed modernists as well. More assertively than they had done in the nineteenth century, the latter began to emphasise supposedly distinctive character of their respective denominations. In liberal Lutheran circles, this singularity was sought in the person of Luther – it were his footsteps that liberal Lutherans, more explicitly than other modernists, wanted to tread.¹⁴⁰ The Remonstrant Brotherhood was said to have a singular character because, in a rather anachronistic interpretation of the seventeenth-century controversy between the Arminian and Gomaritan factions in the Dutch Reformed Church, its founders had supposedly all been 'liberal-minded' and because it was the only church community in which modernists had nothing to fear from orthodoxy.¹⁴¹ Mennonites, finally,

138 'Kerknieuws – Algemeen vrijzinnig', *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* LXXIII.186 (4 July 1916), morning paper A, 3.

139 C.J. Niemeijer, *Kerk en kerkgaan* xv. *De vrijzinnige hervormden* (Huis ter Heide 1930), 7. See also: A. Binnerts Sz., 'Ingezonden stukken – De vrijzinnigen en de kerkgenootschappen', *De Hervorming* 1902-14 (5 April 1902), 109-110; A. Binnerts Sz., 'Ingezonden stukken', *Ibid.* 1903-10 (7 March 1903), 77-78.

140 E.g.: [H.A. van Bakel in:] 'Stadsnieuws – Vereeniging van Vrijzinnige Lutherschen', *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* XLIX.14897 (16/17 October 1926), 9.

141 E.g.: J.A. Beijerman, *De Remonstrantsche Broederschap* (Baarn 1907), 45-46; R. Miedema, 'Kerkelijk leven – Misverstand versterkt in plaats van weggenomen!', *De Hervorming* 1918-08 (23 February 1918), 31; G.J. Heering, 'Oorsprong en karakter der Remonstrantsche Broederschap', in: G.J. Heering, L.J. van Holk and W.J. Wegerif, *De Remonstrantsche Broederschap. Wat zij is en wat zij wil* (Lochem 1928), 1-5; S. Vuyk, *Het einde der remonstranten. Arminius als mythe: vrijheid en verdraagzaamheid bij de remonstranten als probleem* (Kampen 2012), 55-60.

had always felt rather different from other modernists, as they rejected infant baptism. The malcontents among them claimed that Mennonites' theological singularity even went further: after all, as P.H. Veen, Jr. (1867-1933) argued, the theologians by whom malcontents felt inspired, Hoekstra and De Bussy, had a Mennonite background.¹⁴² It is striking to see that while modernists generally blamed orthodoxy for clinging to historical practices and beliefs, the assumed singularity of the various modernist church communities could only be defended on *historical* grounds – no Reformed, Remonstrant, Lutheran, or Mennonite modernist was apparently able to make clear why his own liberal Protestant faith was any different from that of modernists belonging to another church.¹⁴³ Due to the resurgent ecclesial consciousness, the modernist movement did not look the same as it had before 1900.

5 Formulating Modernist Identity

As a consequence of the rise of malcontentism, the urge to no longer characterise modernism simply as a negation of orthodoxy but to formulate it in a positive way became stronger. And as a consequence of the 'ecclesial turn', the acknowledgement that no faith community could do without some kind of doctrinal frame of reference grew as well. Both processes eventually resulted in a rising call for a modernist confession of faith. Already in 1873, the Dutch Reformed minister F.P.J. Sibmacher Zijnen (1826-1895) had called for such a document, in order to give the lie to the many false characteristics orthodoxy attributed to modernists. "The general public outside of our circles," he argued, "knows what we do *not* want, but that is it! As a result, many believe, in good faith, that we live by negations alone."¹⁴⁴ However, drawing up a confession of faith was an idea that was not widely shared among modernists at the time. As Mosselmans and Van Gilse, voicing the then general modernist opinion, replied several weeks after Sibmacher Zijnen's plea, the need for doctrinal unity among the faithful that involved formulating a creed was a Roman Cath-

142 E.g.: P.H. Veen, 'Ingezonden stukken', *De Hervorming* 1909-30 (24 July 1909), 237.

143 Liberal Lutheran A.C. Schade van Westrum, on the other hand, stated that none of the modernist church communities had a singular character: the ministers who served them all gave similar sermons. See: A.C. Schade van Westrum, 'Recht of reden van bestaan', *Ibid.* 1921-23 (11 June 1921), 181-182; A.C. Schade van Westrum, 'Hoofdartikel – Wenschelijk, noodzakelijk, mogelijk', *Ibid.* 1922-25 (24 June 1922), 193-195; A.C. Schade van Westrum, 'Kerkelijk leven – Het eigene', *Ibid.* 1923-21 (26 May 1923), 164-165.

144 F.P.J. Sibmacher Zijnen, "Geen Constituante", *Ibid.* 1873-04 (13 February 1873), 2.

olic principle. Unfortunately, sixteenth-century Calvinists had stuck to this principle, failing to see that people's spiritual well-being did not depend on their endorsement of various dogmas, but rather on the vocation of the church to enlighten and ennoble them. It was up to modernists to eliminate this misconception. "We want to be Protestant rather than Reformed or Lutheran or Mennonite or Remonstrant," Mosselmans and Van Gilse exclaimed. "Protestantism and ecclesial creedalism are incompatible. [. . .] It is un-Christian to judge a brother by the standard of doctrine." The unity of the church did not rest on doctrinal agreement, but solely on Christians' shared experience of the manifestation of the Holy Spirit in their inner selves.¹⁴⁵ This line of reasoning continued to be dominant in the modernist movement throughout the last quarter of the nineteenth century; as late as 1897, for example, H. Oort rejected with general approval the need to pin people's faith down by means of dogmatic formulae. It was impossible to formulate a doctrinal document that did justice to more than one person's experience of the divine. One's personal faith could find expression only in individually chosen words.¹⁴⁶ Yet now, in the early twentieth century, anti-creedalism was becoming a less self-evident characteristic of the modernist movement.

It was no coincidence that it was L. Knappert who, in 1903, launched a discussion on the desirability of a modernist confession of faith. After all, he had been one of the first to openly criticise old-school modernism for its lack of concern for the Dutch Reformed Church and the inherently human need for salvation. As such, he inspired both the movement of malcontents – J. Lindeboom would even depict him as the 'godfather' of malcontentism¹⁴⁷ – and the organisation of the *vrijzinnig-hervormden*. In a series of articles in *De Hervorming*, Knappert denounced modernists' general inability to make clear what they believed in. This was so because they, seeking new forms – including a new vocabulary – to give shape to religious life, tended to speak about God in a pantheistic instead of a theistic manner. Knappert believed that this was the reason why many modernist congregations did not flourish. Moreover, he argued that history showed that it was impossible to reach the masses without some kind of doctrinal formula. Therefore, he concluded, the modernist movement was in desperate need of a confession of faith written in

145 [B.C.J. Mosselmans and J. van Gilse], 'Reorganisatie van de kerk', *De Hervorming* 1873-29 (17 July 1873), 2-3, here 2.

146 H. Oort, *Eene geloofsbelijdenis* (Amsterdam 1897).

147 J. Lindeboom, 'Laurentius Knappert', *Handelingen en levensberichten van de Maatschappij der Nederlandsche Letterkunde te Leiden, over het jaar 1942-1943* (Leiden 1944), 61-90, here 82.

traditional, theistic-Christian terminology.¹⁴⁸ Together with two sympathisers, the Mennonite minister A. Binnerts and the Remonstrant minister P. Eldering (1868-1954), Knappert felt himself called upon to draw up such a statement. The quintessence of this confession was threefold. Committing sin, Knappert, Binnerts, and Eldering stated, is hard to resist, which corrupts people's spiritual life and alienates them from God. Due to his infinite mercy, however, God fills people with a feeling of remorse and the desire for salvation, the desire to be delivered from the power of sin. His love is the antidote against sin, revealed in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.¹⁴⁹ It was not only the orthodox terms used in this draft confession of faith that disturbed old-school modernists; the very idea of such a confession met with fierce criticism, reaching its climax at the meeting of modern theologians in 1904.¹⁵⁰ Acknowledging that his, Binnerts's, and Eldering's malcontentesque confession of faith in particular might disrupt the modernist movement and that a confession of faith in general would inevitably hinder the free development of religious life, Knappert retraced his steps.¹⁵¹ Yet some of his malcontent sympathisers did not follow him in this, among whom were Binnerts, Eldering, and Bleeker. Recognising that the term 'confession of faith' was too controversial in modernist circles, they published a very short 'declaration of faith' in *De Hervorming* shortly after the 1904 meeting of modern theologians. Seeing their rejection of supernaturalism as that which connected them to other modernists, these malcontents stated their belief in an all-powerful God, whose holy and forgiving love is exclusively and decisively revealed in the Gospel and induces people to combat sin.¹⁵² Their declaration did not find a favourable reception: those who were against any doctrinal formula simply ignored it, while those who felt that the modernist movement was in need of more doctrinal clarity thought it was too vague.¹⁵³

148 L. Knappert, 'Nabetrachting', *De Hervorming* 1903-17 (25 April 1903), 129-130; L. Knappert, 'Roeping', *Ibid.* 1903-23 (6 June 1903), 177-178; 1903-24 (13 June 1903), 186-187; 1905-25 (20 June 1905), 193-195; L. Knappert, 'Ons streven, zijn licht en schaduw', *Ibid.* 1903-37 (12 September 1903), 290-191; 1903-38 (19 September 1903), 297-298; 1903-39 (26 September 1903), 305-307; 1903-40 (3 October 1903), 314-315.

149 Herderscheë, *De modern-godsdiensrichting in Nederland*, 329-330.

150 *Ibid.*, 330-331; Cannegieter, *De moderne richting*, 10; Van Driel, *Dienaar van twee heren*, 162-163.

151 L. Knappert, 'Een woord van schuldbelijdenis en van verweer', *De Hervorming* 1904-18 (30 April 1904), 140; [L. Knappert in:] 'Vergadering van moderne theologen, gehouden op 12 en 13 April 1904', appendix to *Ibid.* 1904-19 (7 May 1904), 11-12.

152 A. Binnerts Sz. et al., 'Ingezonden stukken – Verklaring', *Ibid.* 1904-25 (18 June 1904), 198-199.

153 E.g.: Pastor Quidam, 'De "verklaring"', *Ibid.* 1904-27 (2 July 1904), 214; L.N. de Jong, 'Eenheid in het noodige', *Stemmen uit de Vrije Gemeente* XXVII (1904), 165-176; P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., 'Een woord van repliek', *Ibid.* XXVII (1904), 177-180; Van Driel, *Dienaar van twee heren*, 164.

Nonetheless, the craving for some kind of definition of the essence of modernist faith did not die down. In 1903, this craving not only manifested itself in malcontent circles, but also among those who would soon lay the foundations of the *vrijzinnig-hervormde* movement. One of them, the Dutch Reformed minister H. de Groot (1872-1967), stressed in a brochure that Reformed liberals should organise themselves separately from other modernists and that this organisation should be based on a confession of faith, as it would be impossible to effectively challenge orthodox claims without one.¹⁵⁴ Although he felt that it was already hard enough to unite Reformed liberals as such, let alone on a doctrinal basis, and that non-Reformed modernists should be involved in the pursuit of more doctrinal clarity, Niemeijer longed just as much for a confession of faith as did De Groot. However, he did not welcome Knapert's attempt to formulate one, fearing that it would be written in orthodox terminology and that it would hence orient the modernist movement in a reactionary direction.¹⁵⁵ B.D. Eerdmans took up the gauntlet in 1921, defining faith from a *vrijzinnig-hervormd* point of view without using words such as 'sin' and 'salvation'. He focused instead on the unique character of the Gospel of Jesus Christ as the revealed will of God. A year later, C.J. Niemeijer drew up a much longer declaration of religious principles, putting emphasis on the exemplary character of Jesus and the uplifting power of the Holy Spirit. Both Eerdmans and Niemeijer failed to get their drafts accepted. In 1923, the general assembly of the VvH only reached agreement upon a statement of ecclesial principles, describing how *vrijzinnig-hervormden* wanted to organise the Dutch Reformed Church, not what they believed.¹⁵⁶

Eerdmans's and Niemeijer's unsuccessful attempts to get a confession of faith accepted in *vrijzinnig-hervormde* circles in the first half of the 1920s did not prevent others from urging the modernist movement as a whole to come to a religious self-definition in the second half of this decade. In 1926, for example, J.L. Snethlage (1886-1983), a Dutch Reformed minister with a theologically rather isolated position among left-wing modernists, argued that the 'hollow' principles of freedom of conscience and tolerance in religious matters would in due course not be enough to keep the modernist movement together or to give a solid basis to modernist activities. It was therefore "absolutely necessary [. . .] to couch our ideals in a form which appeals to us all and by which

154 H. de Groot, *De grondslag voor aaneensluiting van vrijzinnig-hervormden* (Leeuwarden 1903). L. Knapert wrote an introduction to this brochure.

155 C.J. Niemeijer, 'Kroniek', *Teekenen des Tijds* v (1903), 373-400, here 378-382.

156 Beversluis, *Een halve eeuw strijd en opbouw*, 90-98. In 1937, J. Lindeboom gave the VvH a new statement of principles. See: J. Lindeboom, *Ons beginsel. De beginselverklaring der Vereniging van Vrijzinnige Hervormden in Nederland* (Assen [1937]), 10.

we can test our personal convictions.”¹⁵⁷ Two years later, the general NPB assembly adopted a resolution in which the demand for a clear definition of liberal Protestantism was expressed.¹⁵⁸ The poet R.M.F. Houwink (1899-1987), who would develop in an orthodox Protestant direction in the 1930s, called this resolution a “milestone in the history of liberal Protestantism.” He welcomed it as a sign that the current generation of modernists finally wanted to leave behind “liberal Protestantism in its primitive radical state” – that is, liberal Protestantism as a mere negation of orthodoxy – and that they acknowledged their need for a clear formulation of their faith if they were ever to bring their religious lives to full development and fruition.¹⁵⁹ Voices such as these induced the *Centrale Commissie voor het Vrijzinnig-Protestantisme* (Central Commission for Liberal Protestantism or CC), a body that took over the role of organisational pivot in the modernist movement from the NPB in the mid-1920s and that is dealt with extensively in chapter 4, to start working on such a formulation as of late 1929.¹⁶⁰ After more than a year of disputes, two draft ‘statements of liberal Protestant principles’ – the term ‘confession of faith’ was avoided, as the CC deemed it impossible to formulate concrete conceptions of God that would satisfy all modernists – were ready: one written by the Reformed minister G. Horreüs de Haas (1879-1943), the other by H.T. de Graaf. In June 1931, the CC ultimately reached agreement on a heavily amended version of the latter.¹⁶¹

The statement of principles begins with the assertion that those who identify themselves as ‘liberal Protestants’ belong together because they share a “religious principle,” consisting of the following elements. Liberal Protestants

157 J.L. Snethlage, ‘Een nieuwe vrijzinnige oriëntering’, *De Hervorming* 1926-10 (6 March 1926), 75-76, here 75.

158 D. Hans, ‘Godsdienstig leven – Positief en eendrachtig’, *De Stroom* VI.45 (15 October 1927), 2.

159 R.M.F. Houwink, ‘Positieve vrijzinnigheid’, *De Hervorming* 1929-04 (6 April 1929), 26-29, here 26-27.

160 See also: V.d.W., ‘In God rust mijne ziele. . .’, *Ibid.* 1928-05 (5 May 1928), 36; D. Drijver, ‘Binnenland – Een vrijzinnige geloofsbelijdenis’, *Ibid.* 1930-03 (5 March 1930), 19-20. Individual theologians had already formulated declarations of liberal Protestant faith, such as M.C. van Mourik Broekman in *Vrijzinnig Christelijk geloofsleven* (Leiden [1925]), C.E. Hooykaas in *Tien hoofdpunten van ons geloof* (Huis ter Heide [1929]), and G. Horreüs de Haas in *Credo. Vrijzinnig protestantsche geloofsverklaring* (Huis ter Heide [1930]). Of course, not every liberal Protestant supported the endeavour. The liberal Reformed minister H.J.D.R. Theesing (1889-1981), for example, even went as far as to call the champions of a declaration of faith “extremely orthodox.” Quoted from: H.J.D.R. Theesing, ‘Godsdienstig leven – Vrijzinnig geloofsbelijdenis?’, *De Stroom* VII.6 (14 January 1928), 2.

161 Hoenderdaal, ‘Het vrijzinnig protestantisme tussen de schaduwen van gisteren en morgen’, 213.

recognise the ephemeral character of every doctrinal description of faith. That they 'believe' is a way of saying that they find the meaning and destiny of their lives in the higher reality transcending themselves, to which they refer with the name of God. Giving oneself over to this reality in full confidence is redeeming and the Gospel of Jesus Christ plays a mediating role in this. Man's destiny is known only to God. Man's life on earth prepares him for his destiny, of which death is a part. Man receives his faith within the communion of saints, as the invisible church that transcends denominational lines. Placing one's self-love above God's will is sinful. The development of one's inner life is a personal affair – faith is not something one person can 'give' to others, though he can help these others in developing their inner lives. Every expression of faith deserves respect, yet one should not hide his own convictions. Finally, liberal Protestants believe in the development of the Kingdom of God, though they do not pretend to know – and this is a break with early modernists' expectations – that this development will proceed in a straight, progressive line.¹⁶²

The exact formulations used in the statement of principles are considerably more cryptic than the above paraphrase. For instance, how to make sense of a sentence, dealing with the ephemeral character of confessions of faith, that reads: "we uphold the freedom of individuals and groups to testify in words and deeds to that which God gives them, so that that which is accepted may approach that which is valid"? Therefore, numerous explanatory brochures were issued after the publication of the statement in 1931.¹⁶³ It is not surprising that the statement was criticised for being "too learned," to quote M.J. Jonk (1870-1943), a prominent member of the NPB and VVH branches in Middelburg.

162 On 29 May 1931, M.C. van Mourik Broekman made the statement public in a radio broadcast of the Liberal Protestant Radio Broadcasting Corporation. Referred to in: J.J. Meyer, 'Kerknieuws – Een vrijzinnig-christelijke beginselverklaring', *Het Vaderland* (5 June 1931), evening paper C, 2. Shortly thereafter, it was integrally published in several newspapers. E.g.: 'Beginselverklaring van het Vrijzinnig Protestantisme', *Ibid.* (4 June 1931), evening paper C, 3.

163 D. Bakker et al., *Wij gelooven. . . De vrijzinnig-protestantsche beginselverklaring opgesteld door de Centrale Commissie van het Vrijzinnig Protestantisme nader beschouwd* (Assen [1932]); J.A. de Koning, *De beginselverklaring van het vrijzinnig protestantisme. Een toelichting* (Utrecht 1935¹, 1936², 1937³, 1938⁴); A. Trouw, *Toelichting op de beginselverklaring van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* (Assen [1939]); J.A. de Koning, *Over de beginselverklaring I. De eenheid van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* (s.l. [1948]); A. de Wilde and P. Smits, *Over de beginselverklaring van de Centrale Commissie v.h. Vrijzinnig Protestantisme II. Geloof en belijdenis* / III. *De christelijke grondslag in de beginselverklaring* (s.l. [1949]); C.B. Burger, G.J. Sirks and J. de Graaf, *Over de beginselverklaring van de Centrale Commissie v.h. Vrijzinnig Protestantisme IV. De bestemming van de mens* / V. *De kerk* / VI. *Het Koninkrijk Gods* (s.l. [1949]); J.G. Jacobs, *De beginselverklaring van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* (Utrecht [1960]).

Jonk could not avoid the impression that the statement was “solely meant for theologians and other highly developed individuals, who dispute the accuracy of its words with each other” and that “the great mass of those who are not as intellectually developed [. . .] will not understand it.”¹⁶⁴ The liberal Protestant journalists D. Hans (1882-1946) and J.J. Meyer did not, in contrast to Jonk, withhold their appreciation of the formulations used in the statement, but acknowledged that those formulations indeed did not excel in clarity.¹⁶⁵ Even M.C. van Mourik Broekman, the then chairman of the CC, had to admit that the statement of principles was “no popular document, which one grasps after reading through it once.” On the contrary, it was “a profession of faith, the meaning of which one will more and more learn to understand upon continued reflection.”¹⁶⁶

Although the statement of liberal Protestant principles adopted by the CC was intended to be acceptable to every modernist, the theologians united in the *werkverband-Roessingh*, established as a right-wing modernist study group in 1926, a year after Roessingh's premature death, nevertheless felt the need to write a confession of faith of their own.¹⁶⁷ It was finished in 1933 and supplied with extensive explanatory notes four years later.¹⁶⁸ As C.J. Bleeker (1898-1983), malcontent veteran J.J. Bleeker's son, would explain in 1939, the statement of principles of the CC approached faith rationally, philosophising about the state of mind of the individual liberal Protestant believer, while the confession of faith of the *werkverband* tried to give words to faith as such, taking man's experience of the divine as its point of departure. Moreover, since the CC wanted to satisfy the full modernist spectrum, it had “shied away from [drawing up] a declaration of faith in an ecclesial sense.”¹⁶⁹ In right-wing modernist circles,

164 M.J. Jonk, ‘Ingezonden – Onze geloofsverklaring’, *De Hervorming* 1931-10 (10 October 1931), 77-78. Later, Jonk stated to have noticed that many shared his criticism. See: M.J. Jonk, ‘Onze geloofsverklaring’, *Ibid.* 1931-12 (12 December 1931), 91-92, here 92.

165 While Hans regretted this, Meyer did not. He was pleased that the statement was vague, so that everyone could relate his own faith to it in individually chosen words. See: J.J. Meyer, ‘Kerknieuws – De beginselverklaring van het vrijzinnig protestantisme in de pers’, *Het Vaderland* (27 June 1931), evening paper C, 3.

166 Van Mourik Broekman, ‘Beginselverklaring van het vrijzinnig protestantisme’, 196.

167 An anonymous editor in the *Algemeen Handelsblad* rightly called the confession of faith of the *werkverband-Roessingh* “a remarkable sign of the considerably increased proclivity in liberal Protestant circles to formulate faith.” Quoted from: ‘Kerknieuws – Geloofsbelijdenis in vrijzinnigen geest’, *Algemeen Handelsblad* CX.36089 (21 July 1937), evening paper, 5.

168 L.J. van Holk et al., *Geloofsbelijdenis van het werkverband-Roessingh* (Assen [1937]).

169 ‘De geloofsbelijdenis in het werkverband Roessingh’, *Leeuwarder Courant* CLXXXVIII.23 (27 January 1939), 5.

such a creed, describing and defining the central concepts and notions of faith, was longed for. The confession of faith of the *werkverband* puts forward belief in God as the Creator and the Almighty, who reveals himself “through the inner light” – which C.J. Bleeker rather vaguely described as man’s innate awareness of God’s existence¹⁷⁰ – and in nature, in the human personality, and in history, but above all “in Jesus Christ.” Jesus and Christ, it continued, cannot be separated; in the image of Jesus Christ, God’s love gets shape and the Kingdom of God, to whose realisation all humans are called, is prefigured. Finally, the confession of faith of the *werkverband* stated that every man should recognise his sinfulness before God in order to be blessed with God’s Holy Spirit and hence receive eternal life.¹⁷¹ The formulations it contained turned out to be less straightforward than its authors intended; after it was published, a huge disagreement about the interpretations of those formulations manifested itself within the *werkverband*. The notes intended to explain those formulations complicated things even further.¹⁷²

It was not a coincidence that the *Linker-werkgroep van moderne theologen* (Study Group of Left-Wing Modern Theologians), founded by G. Horreüs de Haas in 1934 to unite those who did not welcome the dominance of right-wing modernism in liberal Protestant theology,¹⁷³ published a statement of principles a year after the *werkverband-Roessingh* had produced its confession of faith. This statement did not specify *what* the members of the *Linker-werkgroep* believed in, but did describe *how* they saw themselves as religious beings. As such, it is justified to discuss their statement as part of the strong urge in the interwar modernist movement to define what liberal Protestant faith was all about. The author of the statement, Horreüs de Haas himself, particularly emphasised that the historical Jesus the Nazarene should not be identified too closely with the “inner Christ of faith,” thereby criticising right-wing modernists’ reference to ‘Jesus Christ’. Recognising a “regular and organic connection between everything in this world [. . .], [referred to with] the name of ‘God,’” and seeing all manifestations of belief in higher things as concrete expressions of “the one universal religion that we all more or less profess,” he defined liberal Protestantism as a “humanistic and cultural” faith, aspiring to

170 C.J. Bleeker, ‘Openbaring’, in: Van Holk, *Geloofsbelijdenis van het werkverband-Roessingh*, 27–51, here 40.

171 *Geloofsbelijdenis van het werkverband-Roessingh*, 2–6. See also: J.G. Jacobs, *Kroniek van het vrijzinnig protestantisme. Van de Reformatie tot heden* (Arnhem 1957), 62–63, 125–126; Hoenderdaal, ‘Het vrijzinnig protestantisme tussen de schaduwen van gisteren en morgen’, 211–212.

172 *Geloofsbelijdenis van het werkverband-Roessingh*, vi.

173 Klooster, *Het vrijzinnig protestantisme in Nederland*, 70.

“the purification of individuals’ lives and a higher community of nations and people based on justice and solidarity.”¹⁷⁴ This statement of principles was intended to be the starting point for further left-wing modernist reflection upon the statement of liberal Protestant principles that the CC had formulated.¹⁷⁵

Ironically, there was thus a feeling in both right- and left-wing modernist circles that the document intended to give more clarity about the identity of liberal Protestantism needed to be elucidated in another document that, in turn, needed further explanation as well.

Finally, the Remonstrant Brotherhood received a confession of faith in 1940, for the second time in its history. In 1621, two years after the Synod of Dordt had expelled the Arminian or Remonstrant faction from the Dutch Reformed Church, its leader Simon Episcopius (1583-1643) had written an apologetic confession of faith, defending man’s free will against the Gomarian theories of limited atonement (the belief that Christ has died only for the elect instead of for mankind as a whole) and perseverance of the saints (the idea that the elect cannot lose their faith) canonised at Dordt. Episcopius’s document had been merely a doctrinal frame of reference, which was not obligatory for ministers to endorse. In 1861, when new articles of association of the Remonstrant Brotherhood were formulated, this document definitively lost its theological significance. In the following decades, when the Brotherhood became entirely modernist, Episcopius had even been blamed for imitating the orthodox practice of writing a confession of faith.¹⁷⁶ Yet, due to the ‘ecclesial turn’ and the growing influence of right-wing modernists – the two most important of whom, Roessingh and Heering, were both Remonstrants –, dissatisfaction with the lack of a confession of faith fully manifested itself in Remonstrant circles in the 1930s.¹⁷⁷ The German occupation of the Netherlands, confronting Dutch society with a National Socialist outlook on life, now gave the final push for

174 The statement of principles is included in: G. Horreüs de Haas, *Overlevering en waarheid* (Assen 1934), 9-11.

175 ‘Kerknieuws – Linker werkgroep der moderne theologen’, *Het Vaderland* (8 November 1934), evening paper D, 2. In the introduction to their statement of principles, Horreüs de Haas and the other members of the *Linker-werkgroep* stated that they concurred with the general purport of the statement of the CC, but deemed it desirable nonetheless to “express themselves in their own way.” Quoted from: Horreüs de Haas, *Overlevering en waarheid*, 9.

176 Barnard, *Van “verstoten kind” tot belijdende kerk*, 65-66, 225, 374, 391, 401.

177 G.J. Sirks (1887-1969) made a plea for a Remonstrant confession of faith in 1927. Haentjens did the same in 1931. See: *Ibid.*, 392; Th.M. van Leeuwen, ‘De belijdenis van 1940’, in: E.J. Kuiper and Th.M. van Leeuwen, *Als een vuurbaken. Teksten over de functie van belijdenissen naar remonstrants inzicht* (Zoetermeer 1994), 77-79.

the general assembly of the Remonstrant Brotherhood to decide upon a confession of faith.¹⁷⁸ Again, no Remonstrant was forced to subscribe to it; as G.J. Heering, its *auctor intellectualis*, explained, this new confession did not pretend to have everlasting value, contrary to the Three Forms of Unity, but was solely meant to give expression to what he called “the Remonstrant mentality” in words congruent with the Christian tradition and the Brotherhood’s past. It had a Trinitarian character, praising God as “our Heavenly Father” who governs all according to his just and merciful will, Jesus Christ as “image of God’s holy Being and Revelation of his mercy,” and God’s Holy Spirit for “opening up our hearts to the Truth.” Moreover, it was a profession of the belief in the communion of saints gathered in the church of Christ, which is called to preach the Gospel, and in the Kingdom of God, “breaking through where Christ rules in our hearts.” This confession of faith met with very little criticism.¹⁷⁹ Even if the specific circumstances are taken into account – the state of war might have made potential critics less inclined to start a debate –, the rather smooth adoption of this confession of faith evinces that traditional Christian terminology and a strong, albeit unspecified, Christological interpretation of faith, once highly controversial among modernists, were now widely accepted in Remonstrant circles.

6 Identifying Modernism: An Evaluation

In the first decades after its birth, a need to clearly delineate the modernist movement was absent. Modernists felt that it was rather self-evident what defined them as religious beings: they were everything orthodox Protestants were not. They rejected a supernaturalist interpretation of the Bible and all ecclesial practices rooted therein, and vehemently opposed every violation of freedom of conscience. Consequently, there was a strong reluctance among modernists to define their movement: after all, pinning people down to formulae was an orthodox practice, while it was simply impossible to put the ‘free piety’ they upheld into words with which they all could identify. More than that, trying to compress modernism into formulae was seen as an infringement on modernism itself. The same reluctance prevented modernists from getting tightly organised: the boundaries of a movement were more fluid than those of a party, which required all its members to loyally commit themselves

178 J.F. Goud, ‘Wij geloven’, in: J.F. Goud and K.J. Holtzapffel (eds.), *Wij geloven – wat geloven wij? Remonstrants belijden in 1940 en nu* (Zoetermeer 2004), 18–46, here 24.

179 Barnard, *Van “verstoten kind” tot belijdende kerk*, 393–401.

to one and the same programme of action. Still, modernists felt that everyone who aspired to the modernisation of Christianity and the permeation of society with this modernised Christianity, regardless of the way in which he wanted to realise this aspiration, should be welcome in their ranks. It was this aspiration from which modernists took their identity. In line with this, they prided themselves on being the true heirs to the Reformation; they wanted to complete the reforms of church life and social life that the earliest Protestants had, in their view, only half-heartedly begun. When the short-lived 'ethical modernist' sub-current evaporated after 1880, the archetype of a modernist, whose worldview and weariness with ongoing ecclesial struggles (particularly in the Dutch Reformed Church) later came to be called 'old-school modernism', was formed. F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr. and J. van Loenen Martinet were two of the most pre-eminent examples of this archetype and edited *De Hervorming* accordingly.

The dichotomy between modernism and orthodoxy was more problematic than modernists generally recognised: orthodox Protestants also felt that they were, for example, the champions of freedom of conscience. Moreover, as early as the 1880s, dissatisfaction with modernism as a mere negation of orthodoxy became manifest. Both of these factors did not immediately challenge the way modernists looked at themselves: they continued to cling to their self-image as the true heirs to the Reformation. Dissatisfied modernists were reassuringly told in the modernist press that it was necessary to shatter the old – supernaturalist beliefs and traditions – before something new could be built. In the 1880s and early 1890s, the expectation that the future would be theirs was still predominant among modernists. The feeling that modernists would eventually create new forms in which religious life could find expression still prevailed among them.

However, when those new forms continued to be lacking, orthodoxy continued to become ever more influential instead of insignificant, and a new generation that had not witnessed the heyday of modernism began to question what had been self-evident for first-generation modernists, the problematic and unsatisfactory character of modernism as everything orthodoxy was not developed into a genuine identity crisis from the second half of the 1890s onwards. In modernist circles, it came to be recognised that while orthodox Protestants might caricature modernists, the latter had equally caricatured the former – as a consequence of which their identity did not come down to a negation of orthodoxy, but rather to a negation of a *caricature* of orthodoxy. As B.D. Eerdmans and others tried to show, even the confessionalist current within orthodoxy was not immune to convictions it claimed to reject in modernism. In turn, the modernist movement became less decisive in its rejection of orthodoxy. A group of theologically discontented modernists,

blaming old-school modernism for its conceptual vagueness and intellectualism, fell back on orthodox terminology to give expression to their inner lives. Another group actively sought rapprochement with non-confessionalist orthodoxy. Both groups, together with those modernists in the Dutch Reformed Church who wanted to counteract ecclesial indifference in their circles, came to identify themselves as '*vrijzinnig*' rather than '*modern*', due to the connotations – in their view negative – of the latter term. This trend should not be trivialised. While '*modern*' connoted reform-mindedness, the embracement of the term '*vrijzinnig*' marked a significant shift of focus: feeling marginalised, modernists in the early twentieth century basically gave up their pursuit of a structurally reformed church life, or even an alternative to church life, and now rather attempted to stop their position within existing church life from deteriorating any further.

Because modernists did not express their experiences of the divine in a shared vocabulary, their sense of togetherness was still based on their self-identification as non-orthodox, and their movement was confronted with various ecclesial and theological groups in its midst that began to accentuate their distinctive features, the need for some kind of 'declaration of faith' emerged and gradually intensified in the early twentieth century. Such a declaration should answer the questions of what liberal Protestantism was all about and what the underlying unity of all who identified as 'liberal Protestants' actually was. A major stimulus to defining liberal Protestantism was a 1923 lecture in which K.H. Roessingh blamed modernists for their lack of organisation and insight into their spiritual unity.¹⁸⁰ As chapter 4 indicates, Roessingh's first complaint almost immediately led to the creation of the CC. His second indictment ultimately induced the CC to come to clarity regarding modernists' shared identity, finding completion in a 'statement of liberal Protestant principles' in 1931. Moreover, the feeling of living in a 'period of transition' in a spiritual respect intensified the need for such a statement as well. Particularly after the First World War, there was a tendency in the modernist press, as there was in culture generally, to stress that 'the old' had had its turn, but that 'the new' had yet to announce itself.¹⁸¹ Some must have felt that a definition of liberal Protestantism might serve as something to which modernists could hold on to in these confusing times.

180 Roessingh, 'Rede voor de Vergadering van Moderne Theologen'.

181 E.g.: G. Horreüs de Haas, *De nieuwe maatschappij* ([Leeuwarden 1917]); A.H. van der Hoeve, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – De mentaliteit der 19^{de} eeuw', *De Hervorming* 1920-09 (6 March 1920), 33; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Onze eigen tijd', *Ibid.* 1921-23 (11 June 1921), 179-180, here 179; K.F. Proost, 'Hoofdartikel – Mystiek in literatuur', *Ibid.* 1922-18 (6 May 1922), 137-138, here 137; K.F. Proost, 'Boekbespreking – "Communisme en moraal"', *Ibid.* 1926-15 (10 April 1926), 117.

However, instead of making clear what 'being a modernist' implied and fostering more unity among modernists on a basis exceeding the mere fact that they did not see themselves as orthodox, the CC's statement of liberal Protestant principles was rather vague and did not prevent the different modernist subcurrents from giving expression to religious life in distinct concepts and words. Of course, while the statement can hardly be qualified as anything other than 'vague' in retrospect, it might have been the case that contemporary liberal Protestants did not perceive it as such.¹⁸² Yet, the statement was characterised as having ambiguous formulations even in the year of its publication and, what is more, was actually intended to be vague. The CC deliberately did not specify what it meant when speaking of 'Jesus Christ', 'the mediating role of the Gospel', or 'sinfulness' in its statement, in order to give every modernist the opportunity to interpret its formulations individually.¹⁸³ This was in line with the open character of the modernist movement, but did not contribute to providing a clear description of liberal Protestantism, one of the motives for drawing up a declaration of faith in the first place. As for the other motive behind the endeavour to draw up such a declaration – giving modernists' spiritual unity a conceptual underpinning –, the CC's statement did not fulfil its purpose either. The historian G.J. Hoenderdaal alleges that the statement "has had a unifying function" and "has been cited often," but all signs rather point to the contrary.¹⁸⁴ Soon after its issuing, alternative documents describing the essence of liberal Protestantism were formulated in right-wing and left-wing modernist circles, sealing the fate of the CC's statement. As early as the late 1940s, the Remonstrant minister J.A. de Koning (1899-1973) lamented that the CC's statement had "faded somewhat into the background."¹⁸⁵ In 1960, J.G. Jacobs, the then pastor of the NPB branch in The Hague, had to conclude that it "has unfortunately not played the role that could be expected of it, and has not become as known as it undoubtedly deserved to be."¹⁸⁶ Hoenderdaal does recognise that the confessions of faith of the *werkverband-Roessingh* and the Remonstrant Brotherhood had already become superseded after the Second World War: for liberal Protestants after 1945, he argued, it was partic-

182 The qualification 'vague' is attributed to the statement of the CC in: Smits, *De identiteitsimpasse van het vrijzinnig protestantisme*, 35-36; Schuurmsma, *Jaren van opgang*, 120.

183 J.J. Meyer, 'Kerknieuws – De beginselverklaring van het vrijzinnig protestantisme in de pers', *Het Vaderland* (27 June 1931), evening paper C, 3.

184 Hoenderdaal, 'Het vrijzinnig protestantisme tussen de schaduwen van gisteren en morgen', 214.

185 De Koning, *Over de beginselverklaring* 1, 4. See also: Smits, *De identiteitsimpasse van het vrijzinnig protestantisme*, 34.

186 Jacobs, *De beginselverklaring van het vrijzinnig protestantisme*, 1.

ularly impossible to speak as “uninhibitedly about God’s omnipotence” as do these two confessions of faith.¹⁸⁷

Even more significant than the phrases and concepts used in the various declarations of faith written in the first decades of the twentieth century, and the vagueness and rapid wearing out of these phrases and concepts is, in terms of modernists’ self-image, the mere fact that such declarations were written at all: it reveals that early twentieth-century modernists were struggling with their identity, due to their perception that first-generation modernists’ expectations had not come true and that the self-image rooted in these expectations was no longer tenable. This, as the next chapters show, affected the development of their movement in the context of organised religious life.

187 Hoenderdaal, ‘Het vrijzinnig protestantisme tussen de schaduwen van gisteren en morgen’, 212–213.

Envisioning the Faith Community of Tomorrow

1 “The Ape of God’s Kingdom”

In the speech with which he inaugurated the 1909 annual NPB meeting, the Remonstrant minister W.H. Stenfert Kroese (1850–1920), the then chairman of the NPB, looked back upon the formative years of the modernist movement. High expectations, he recalled, had accompanied the founding and early development of the *Protestantenbond*. There had been a strong sentiment that the NPB would not only be a place of refuge for modernists escaping church congregations with orthodox majorities, but that it would ultimately even come to replace the institution of the church altogether. The leadership of the NPB had cherished the ideal that modernists would one day no longer be divided among several church denominations, but that they would be united in the NPB. Moreover, there had been a predominant feeling in NPB circles that existing ecclesial practices and regulations hindered the free development of religious life. It had therefore been hoped, Stenfert Kroese averred, that the NPB would give shape to a new kind of religious community:

Indeed, that was the illusion. Had the church not had its day? Had the modern worldview and modern outlook on life not brought into being an altered outlook on church life? Had the church not stopped being the supernatural institution of salvation, and had the time not come to replace it by a community in which kindred spirits would seek to nourish and strengthen each other’s spiritual lives? And was the *Protestantenbond*, the organisational centre of the modernist movement, not the obvious body to replace the church? – Yes, it was perfectly understandable that these questions were asked and that the illusion mentioned above stirred modernists’ minds and hearts. In many respects, the church only had itself to blame for that.¹

In the 1860s and 1870s, Stenfert Kroese explained, some modernists had doubted whether it was possible to purge the church of the spirit of clericalism with which it had been permeated from its emergence onwards. Claiming that the whole concept of the church did not make any sense without doctrinal

1 [W.H. Stenfert Kroese in:] ‘Berichten, enz. – De algemeene vergadering’, *De Hervorming* 1909–44 (30 October 1909), 348–350, here 349.

unity and a supernatural interpretation of Christianity, they had urged their fellow modernists to seek new forms in which a modernised Christianity could find expression. Stenfert Kroese illustrated his atmospheric description of the early modernist movement by quoting what some of its then protagonists had said about the institution of the church. Alluding to the proverb 'the ape of God', with which such theologians as Augustine (354-430) and Luther had depicted Satan as an unsuccessful, evil imitator of God, the Dutch Reformed minister J.P. de Keyser (1818-1878) had labelled the church as "the ape of God's Kingdom." By this he meant that the church might seem to be doing what God had in mind, but that this was merely a delusion. In line with this, I. Hooykaas advanced the proposition that Christianity would have made much more progress if there had never been a church. Ph.R. Hugenholtz even implied that the Kingdom of God would never be fulfilled as long as the church continued to exist.² Another modernist whom Stenfert Kroese could have mentioned was Rauwenhoff. In 1867, the latter had published an article in which he stated that society was beginning to replace the church as the focal point of religious life. Accordingly, Rauwenhoff argued that it was best for church denominations to disintegrate into autonomous congregations, which would bring church life and social life into a new synthesis. Lindeboom regards this article as best exemplifying the prevailing attitude towards the church among first-generation modernists. Although modernists did not unanimously agreed with Rauwenhoff, opinions such as his predominated in discussions on ecclesial affairs in the early modernist movement; after Rauwenhoff's 1867 article, voices such as his, to quote Lindeboom, "swelled into a powerful choir."³

Yet by 1909, the tide had already turned. Stenfert Kroese even had to warn in his speech about "denominationalism," i.e. the tendency he noticed among modernists to feel more involved with the different church denominations to which they belonged than with the modernist movement as a whole, and the growing tendency to identify religious life with church life.⁴ Earlier that year, B.D. Eerdmans, writing under the pen name '*Ignotus*', had stated that "at present, church denominations exert a manifest attraction on modernists." Contrary to Rauwenhoff's expectation, "contemporary liberal Protestants clearly show that they attach more value to the concept of the church than to the concept of the free congregation."⁵ This had been noticeable even six years

2 [W.H. Stenfert Kroese in:] 'Berichten, enz. – De algemeene vergadering', *De Hervorming* 1909-44 (30 October 1909), 348-350, here 349.

3 Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III, 44.

4 [W.H. Stenfert Kroese in:] 'Berichten, enz. – De algemeene vergadering', *De Hervorming* 1909-44 (30 October 1909), 348-350, here 349.

5 Ignotus [B.D. Eerdmans], 'Reactie of vooruitgang?', *Theologisch Tijdschrift* XLIII (1909), 1-16, 146-180, here 7-8; Van Driel, *Dienaar van twee heren*, 176.

before. In 1903, a discussion was held during the annual meeting of modern theologians on “modernists’ resurgent attachment to church denominations.”⁶ I. van den Bergh, who delivered an address on the subject, asked whether this trend ought to be appreciated or regretted. It should be considered positively, he argued, if it stemmed from a growing aversion to excessive individualism and a growing awareness that religion can only exert influence on society through institutions. As chapter 9 analyses, this awareness, which was indeed increasing in modernist circles at the time, in turn stemmed from the perception that while the modernist movement was in danger of becoming marginalised, other, highly institutionalised or ‘pillarised’, groups were becoming ever more socially influential and politically powerful. On the other hand, the growing revaluation of the institution of the church should be considered negatively in Van den Bergh’s opinion if it led to denominational particularism and to a halt in the pursuit of church reform. Van den Bergh was particularly critical of modernists who sacrificed dedication to modernist principles in favour of staying in the Dutch Reformed Church. That church lacked a modernist majority, forcing modernists to make concessions to their adversaries, and hence lacked the potential to be the institution through which modernists could exert more influence on society. This last remark evoked objections, especially from C.J. Niemeijer. Another speaker, C.W. Colenbrander, concluded from Van den Bergh’s words that, however it might be evaluated, the renewed appreciation of the institution of the church had one inevitable consequence: it prevented the NPB from ever replacing the existing churches. Not a single attendee of the 1903 meeting of modern theologians really seemed to deplore this.⁷

In the decades following the 1900s, voices rejecting the institution of the church nearly disappeared from modernist public opinion. In 1926, for example, the CC, which had taken over the role of organisational centre of the modernist movement from the NPB, issued a pamphlet in which it claimed that “Christianity cannot be conceived of as a community building and community reform force in our society without a church.”⁸ This claim, diametrically opposed to what Rauwenhoff had maintained in 1867, did not lead to any protest. Lindeboom identifies the “intensified appreciation of the institution of the church,” of which this striking contrast was the result, as one of the defining characteristics of the modernist movement from the late 1890s on-

6 [I. van den Bergh in:] ‘Berichten, enz. – Vergadering van moderne theologen’, *De Hervorming* 1903-32 (8 August 1903), 251.

7 ‘Binnenlandsch nieuws – Moderne theologen’, *Het Nieuws van den Dag* 1903-10324 (3 September 1903), 9-10.

8 ‘Jeugdbeweging – Jeugddag 1926’, *De Hervorming* 1926-02 (9 January 1926), 10-12, here 11.

wards.⁹ Even in the NPB, in the early history of which Lindeboom notices a strong anti-church orientation, this process made itself felt: many if not most NPB branches developed into church-like congregations, giving their members the opportunity to baptise their children and celebrate the Lord's Supper. In the 1870s and 1880s, that would have been unheard of. Why did this revaluation of the church and ecclesial practices occur? This chapter argues that while the NPB wanted to be the organisation in which all Dutch modernists from different denominations would be united, and to give shape to a new kind of religious community without ecclesial features, it paradoxically played a decisive role in the occurrence of this 'ecclesial turn'. Moreover, the concept of the *volkskerk* that became dominant in Dutch Reformed thinking fuelled denominationalism both among modernists belonging to the Dutch Reformed Church and those belonging to other churches, and tempered radical ecclesial reform-mindedness.

2 The NPB and the Free Congregation as Alternatives to the Existing Churches

In the late 1860s, optimism was the dominant sentiment within the modernist movement. Modernists were convinced that the future was theirs and did not doubt their chances of bringing about a second Reformation. The already-mentioned article Rauwenhoff wrote in 1867 was a perfect reflection thereof. It was, already at that moment itself, an important article, which was further accentuated by the fact that it introduced the first issue of the *Theologisch Tijdschrift*. This journal was intended to be, and effectively turned out to be, the main platform from which modern theologians could present and discuss the results of their research. In his article, Rauwenhoff gave an overview of the way in which the concept of the church had developed over time as well as a normative interpretation of this development. The church as an institution, he argued, did not go back to Jesus or the apostles. Only from the second century of the Common Era onwards had it become customary to view the church "as a divine institution, as the sole possessor of the divine truth, which proclaims this truth as infallible, [and] as the sole possessor, authorised by God, of the only true means of salvation."¹⁰ Roman Catholics still looked at the church in this way and believed that the church, personified in the divinely ordained priest, was an indispensable intermediary between them and God, or,

9 Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* 111, 90.

10 L.W.E. Rauwenhoff, 'De kerk', *Theologisch Tijdschrift* 1 (1867), 1-37, here 9; P.L. Slis, *L.W.E. Rauwenhoff* (1828-1889). *Apologeet van het modernisme* (Kampen 2003), 115-117.

to put it another way, that the church was their gateway to heaven. In the sixteenth century, the Reformers had challenged this notion by stating that the authority of the individual conscience prevails over clerical authority. They based this claim on biblical words that could be interpreted as an endorsement of their vision. Protestants, however, mistakenly saw the *means* whereby the Reformers upheld the authority of conscience – that is, the authority of Scripture – as a principle in itself. In consequence, the church continued to be seen in Protestantism as a divine institution, albeit not as a distributor of salvation, but as the disseminator of the Word of God and as the guardian of the confessions of faith that ‘correctly’ explain the Word of God. For that reason, Rauwenhoff concluded that Protestants actually preserved the supernatural foundation of the institution of the church.¹¹

Because modern theologians decisively rejected supernaturalism, modernists ought therefore to break with the institution of the church as well. On the one hand, Rauwenhoff expected that this would not be too difficult, as society was already taking over tasks that had previously been performed by the church. In due course, he believed, the church would simply evaporate. However, this only applied to its ‘material’ side; as regards its ‘spiritual’ side, the church was still the form in which Christian communities of faith were organised. What then, Rauwenhoff asked, given that the church was viewed by non-modernists as having an intrinsically supernatural basis, a basis that modernists could not accept, should the attitude of liberal Protestants towards the church be?

Rauwenhoff did not advise modernists to leave their congregations in order to immediately create newly structured communities of faith outside existing church life. Leaving the churches voluntarily would have consequences that could hamper the development of the modernist movement: it would deprive modernists of opportunities to lay claim to church property and to influence the (still) orthodox masses.¹² Moreover, supernaturalist Protestants might interpret a massive exodus as a sign that modernists themselves acknowledged that they had no right to be in the church. Yet, Rauwenhoff stressed that the modernist movement had not entered the church from the outside, but had rather emerged within it and *thus* had all the right to be in it. Besides, he was

11 Rauwenhoff, ‘De kerk’, 14–15; J. van den Berg, ‘Oplossing der kerk in de maatschappij? Modernen, ethischen en de toekomstvisie van Richard Rothe’, in: *Ad interim. Opstellen over eschatologie, apocalypiek en ethiek, aangeboden aan prof.dr. R. Schippers, ter gelegenheid van zijn vijf en twintig-jarig ambtsjubileum aan de faculteit der godgeleerdheid van de Vrije Universiteit* (Kampen [1975]), 151–167, here 152–156.

12 Rauwenhoff, ‘De kerk’, 24–25.

convinced that, in the long run, the church as it existed in his day – that is, as a multitude of denominations comprising numerous congregations, which in turn comprised people with diverse conceptions of God – was doomed to perish anyway. Instead of anticipating this ultimate and inevitable dissolution of the church by withdrawing from it right away, modernists should try to reform the church from within, in such a way that the community of faith, of which the church was the institutional embodiment, could take its ‘natural’ shape. According to Rauwenhoff, communities of faith ‘naturally’ had, and would ‘naturally’ take, the form of free congregations, voluntary associations of like-minded believers, unfettered by any historically-given denominational, overarching structure.¹³

Rauwenhoff’s article was not unanimously applauded in modernist circles. In 1867, in the same volume of *Theologisch Tijdschrift*, F.W.B. van Bell commented on it with words of disapproval. According to him, Rauwenhoff made the mistake of taking the church in its Roman Catholic form to be normative. As a result, Rauwenhoff concluded that the institution of the church intrinsically had a supernatural basis. Van Bell disagreed: the church had been given, and continued to have, such a foundation only because Christians of both past and present held supernaturalist beliefs. The church, however, existed independently of such beliefs. It had naturally come into being as the organisational form of expression of Christians’ heartfelt desire to worship God collectively. Accordingly, Van Bell challenged Rauwenhoff’s claim that free congregations, consisting only of like-minded individuals, were the ‘natural’ institutional embodiments of the Christian community of faith. Rather, such congregations conflicted with Jesus’s notion of humanity, as their existence would inevitably lead to a self-chosen “isolation of the intellectually most developed and most civilised individuals, who will no longer associate with less developed and less civilised people.”¹⁴

Notwithstanding criticism such as Van Bell’s, the church was a controversial institution among modernists. Unsurprisingly, it was not long before actual attempts were made within the modernist movement to reform the existing configurations of ecclesial-religious life. The founding of the NPB could be seen as such an attempt. From its formation onwards, two tendencies were discernible within its ranks: one in which the NPB was seen as *additional* to

13 Rauwenhoff, ‘De kerk’, 33.

14 F.W.B. van Bell, ‘De modernen in het protestantsche kerkgenootschap’, *Theologisch Tijdschrift* 1 (1867), 211–231, here 229; H. Faber, *Gedachten over de kerk in het vrijzinnig christendom* (Arnhem 1946), 16–18; Van den Berg, ‘Oplossing der kerk in de maatschappij?’, 156.

church life, created to support liberal-minded church members in all possible ways as well as to facilitate cross-denominational contacts, the other in which the association was thought of as an *alternative* to church life, as a prefiguration of the faith community of the future.¹⁵ The NPB's aim of enhancing the free development of religious life both within and outside the sphere of the churches should be seen as a compromise between these two tendencies. The branches that came into being under the auspices of the NPB on the local level had therefore a rather ambiguous character. On the one hand, they functioned as meeting places of religious liberals in a particular municipality, offering lectures, creating reading groups, and functioning as social clubs. On the other hand, a lot of branches gradually adopted 'ecclesial' practices, such as organising religious services (eventually even including baptism and the Lord's Supper), setting up Sunday schools, and appointing 'pastors'. As such, they effectively developed into nondenominational, 'free' congregations.¹⁶ As shown below, this development would ultimately have serious consequences for the position of the NPB within the modernist movement.

From the beginning, the NPB had particular difficulty in positioning itself vis-à-vis the largest Protestant denomination in the Netherlands, the Dutch Reformed Church. It did not want to interfere in inner-church affairs as an interested party, but some branches nonetheless participated in Dutch Reformed church council elections, presenting their own list of candidates or recommending candidates on other lists. In places where the Dutch Reformed community was primarily orthodox, a growing number of modernists no longer made the Sunday trip to their local congregation, but attended 'church' in the local NPB branch instead.¹⁷ As a result, many branches became an alternative to existing (Dutch Reformed) church life, in the sense that they provided modernists with another venue for religious services. Yet, regarding their organisation, both externally (their configuration) and internally (the content of the services they offered), NPB branches hardly differed from denominational congregations. They were thus *not* alternatives in the sense of offering something completely new. They resembled instead the slightly older orthodox Reformed *evangelisaties* or *evangelisatieverenigingen* (literally: evangelisation societies), which also conducted religious services as an alternative

15 Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III, 50; Boerlage, *De Nederlandse Protestanten Bond*, 2; P.J.C. Korver, '125 jaar NPB: kerk of vereniging?', in: E. Delvaux-den Boer et al. (eds.), *Balans in beweging. Contouren van een vrijzinnige geloofsgemeenschap: NPB 1870-1995* (Zwolle 1996), 1-22, here 8.

16 Krijger, 'De organisatorische spin in het vrijzinnige web', 44-45.

17 [Van den Bergh], *De Nederlandsche Protestantenvbond*, 17-18; A.H. van der Hoeve, *Het werk van den Nederlandschen Protestantenvbond* (Zaltbommel [1911] 1917), 6.

to those in Dutch Reformed congregations.¹⁸ Because of their dual character, NPB branches never really became experimental grounds for religious reorganisation. Next to a group of modernists who envisioned the NPB as becoming the faith community of tomorrow, there was a large group of NPB members who did not want to give up their church membership and primarily sought a place of 'refuge', an escape from what they experienced as orthodox tyranny. They were less concerned with liturgical reforms than with preserving their place within institutional Christianity; for them, the NPB was a temporary or semi-permanent shelter, which they would leave as soon as their home congregations would allow them to worship God the way they wanted to. Lindeboom is right to characterise the dominant spirit among the NPB leaders in the first years after the association's founding as "anti-ecclesial,"¹⁹ but its aim of strengthening and upholding the modernist element in the churches – while simultaneously stimulating the development of the modernist movement outside of the churches – hindered the NPB from radically altering existing church practices.²⁰

In spite of all this, much discussion took place within the NPB on how the existing churches might be reformed and what the future of the church should be. The first issues of *De Hervorming* were full of articles in which modernist opinion makers made suggestions about solving factional struggles and anticipating possible future developments. Regarding institutional reforms, specific attention was paid to the position of modernists within the Dutch Reformed Church. As mentioned, their position had become precarious after 1867 due to the extension of the right to vote in church council elections to all male members of the Dutch Reformed Church, which made orthodoxy more influential and hence led to an intensification of factional quarrels. Some Dutch Reformed modernists agreed with Rauwenhoff that the institution of the church was no longer capable of giving shape to religious community life. They tried to find a way to appease the relationships with their orthodox fellow church members as a transitional measure, in order to subsequently make possible a harmonious division of church property, and to finally create more homogeneous, autonomous congregations of kindred spirits. Others, whose numbers would grow over the years, did not see a *modus vivendi* with orthodoxy as an intermediate stage on the way towards a disintegration of the

18 The oldest of these *evangelisatieverenigingen* were founded in response to the rise of modern theology. See: Houkes, *Christelijke vaderlanders*, 73-86; T.T. Osinga, 'Hervormde evangelisatieverenigingen in Nederland (1855-1951)', *Documentatieblad voor de Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis* na 1800 XXXII.71 (December 2009), 35-47.

19 Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III, 51, 98.

20 Krijger, 'De Protestantenbond als kerk der toekomst', 34.

church, but rather as an ultimate goal in itself. For yet another group, proactively breaking with the church was an actual option.

Ph.R. Hugenholtz and his brother P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., two Dutch Reformed ministers in Amsterdam, belonged to this last category. Initially, both had hoped for a solution to the conflict of interests between modernists and orthodoxy *within* the Dutch Reformed Church. Ph.R. Hugenholtz in particular actively engaged himself in finding such a solution. In the early 1870s, together with H.Ph. de Kanter, he advocated the idea of giving local congregations the opportunity to divide themselves into *kerspelen* (sub-parishes), thus enabling all currents within the Dutch Reformed Church to attain a high degree of autonomy while dividing up church property proportionally and preserving the existing denominational structure. The synod, however, rejected this plan in 1874.²¹ In the mid-1870s, Ph.R. Hugenholtz made himself one of the leading modernist protesters against certain standardised questions that aspiring members and aspiring ministers had to answer in the affirmative in order to be fully accepted into the Dutch Reformed Church. These questions were intentionally formulated so vaguely that both orthodox and modernist Protestants could interpret them in any way they desired. However, they contained a reference to Jesus as the 'only-begotten Son of God' – a sentence that could be read symbolically, but led to much discomfort in modernist circles. Even more problematic was the fact that these questions were standardised and prescribed, which some modernists saw as a matter of *formulierdwang* (moral compulsion that denied ministers and aspiring church members the right to formulate their faith in their own words). The synod initially seemed willing to give in to these modernist objections, but in 1877, when its makeup had changed, it ultimately decided to give modernists only limited possibility to deviate from the standardised questions.²² For the Hugenholtz brothers, this decision was the last straw. They could no longer stand the incoherent and – in their eyes – hypocritical policy of the synod in approving, amending, and reversing cryptic formulations and ambiguous regulations in a desperate attempt to keep the unitary denominational structure of the Dutch Reformed Church intact.²³ In an 1877 brochure, Ph.R. Hugenholtz contrasted this policy

21 *Vervolg handelingen NHK 1873/1874*, 72.

22 *Handelingen NHK 1877*, 499–500; Hugenholtz, Jr., *Indrukken en herinneringen*, 146–148.

23 P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., *Waarom gaan wij heen? Een woord van rekenschap* (Amsterdam 1877), 19–22; J.A. Groen, Jr., 'De Vrije Gemeente honderd jaar', *Ons Amsterdam* xxix.10 (October 1977), 290–294; E.H. Cossee, 'De stichting van de Vrije Gemeente, haar voorgeschiedenis en uitwerking', in: J.D. Snel et al. (eds.), *En God bleef toch in Mokum. Amsterdamse kerkgeschiedenis in de negentiende en twintigste eeuw* (Delft 2000), 99–116, here 107–108.

with his own ideal picture of communal religious life, a picture that was completely in line with the ideal of free congregations of which Rauwenhoff had spoken ten years earlier.²⁴

Yet, whereas Rauwenhoff had pleaded for an organic 'dissolution' of existing church life, the Hugenholtz brothers decided to voluntarily leave church, a decision in which they were supported by several hundred Dutch Reformed liberals in Amsterdam.²⁵ Their secession was widely covered by the press, and provoked discussion in liberal Protestants circles. Two modernist members of the Dutch Reformed congregation in Amsterdam immediately snatched up their pens to condemn this move. The first of these anonymous pamphleteers did not understand the timing of the Hugenholtz brothers' breakaway; in practice, there was doctrinal freedom in the Dutch Reformed Church and the 1877 synod had even created an opportunity, limited as it might be, for ministers whose conscience required it to ask members-to-be to assent to questions other than those prescribed. The modernist movement was still young and it was therefore unrealistic to expect that a majority of churchgoers would already be won over to modernist ideas and principles – indeed, Ph.R. Hugenholtz himself had been a 'convert' from orthodoxy to modernism, which proved that other orthodox church members might in due course undergo the same conversion. Moreover, by leaving the church, modernists provided support for confessionalists' claim that everyone who rejected the doctrines on which the Dutch Reformed Church had been built in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, but still continued to be a church member, was disingenuous.²⁶ The other pamphleteer raised similar points of criticism and put forward an additional argument for not following Ph.R. and P.H. Hugenholtz: because modernism was, in essence, a negation of supernaturalism and a challenge to confessionalism, and because, in consequence, the modernist movement derived much of its strength from its confrontation with supernaturalism and confessionalism, modernists would *lose* much of their strength should they leave their main battlefield, namely the Dutch Reformed Church. What is more, this pamphleteer was not only sceptical about the Hugenholtz brothers' secession as such, but also about the step they were to take next. Were things really that much better in other denominations? And if the choice was made to organise themselves separately, would the Hugenholtz brothers' sympath-

24 Ph.R. Hugenholtz, *De kerk en de eischen van het heden* (Amsterdam 1877), 7, 23-30.

25 Ph.R. Hugenholtz, *Berusten of breken? Een woord tot de moderne leden der Nederlandsche Hervormde Kerk* (Amsterdam 1877), 20-21.

26 *Waarom blijven wij in de Nederlandsche Hervormde Kerk? Gedachten van een vrijzinnig lid naar aanleiding van het heengaan der heeren Hugenholtz* (Amsterdam 1877), 6, 10-16.

isers make enough sacrifices to create a new, sustainable community of faith out of nothing? The anonymous author did not think so.²⁷

The modernist secessionists in Amsterdam were confronted with similar questions. Should they join the Remonstrant Brotherhood, the governing bodies and leading theologians of which had been steering a decisively modernist course the last couple of years? Would it be better to aspire after a reconfiguration of ecclesial life under the banner of the NPB? Or could this aspiration best be realised by founding an entirely new organisation? After some deliberation, the first question was answered in the negative. Joining the Remonstrant Brotherhood would have administrative and financial benefits. Moreover, Remonstrant congregations were not as tightly linked as their Dutch Reformed counterparts. However, they did not meet the Hugenholtz brothers' ideal of what a community of faith should be.²⁸ Remonstrant ministers were statutorily obliged to preach on all Christian holidays – including the festival of Pentecost, which marked the beginning of the church, and Ascension Day, which was based on a biblical narrative that could not, in contrast to the Christmas and Easter stories, easily be interpreted symbolically.²⁹ Remonstrant services also included baptism and the Lord's Supper, and new members were officially 'confirmed' during special ceremonies. Remonstrant congregations continued

27 *Wilt gij ook niet heengaan? Een woord aan de vrijzinnige leden der Nederduitsch Hervormde Gemeente* (Amsterdam 1877), 10–15.

28 P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr. rather exaggerated when he stated, in an attempt to justify his decision not to join the Remonstrant Brotherhood, that in the latter, "modernist and conservative elements are still intermingled." P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., 'De stichting der Vrije Gemeente te Amsterdam', *Stemmen uit de Vrije Gemeente* 1 (1878), 9–39, here 16; P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr. (H. Rogaar ed.), *Bloemlezing uit de toespraken en artikelen van P.H. Hugenholtz Jr., uitgegeven te zijner nagedachtenis* (Amsterdam 1912), 4–22. With Waddinxveen as a notable exception, Remonstrant congregations all across the country rapidly gained modernist majorities in the 1870s.

29 For contemporary modernist discussions on the question of whether Ascension Day should be preserved as a holiday, see, e.g.: D.C. de Haas, *Onze feesten beschouwd van het standpunt der nieuwe rigting voor belangstellende gemeenteleden* (Sint Annaparochie 1867); Een Noordbrabantsch kerkganger, 'Hemelvaartsprediking?', *De Hervorming* 1874–16 (16 April 1874), 1; E.J.W. Koch, 'Nog iets over het Hemelvaartsfeest', *Ibid.* 1874–19 (7 May 1874), 3; Een Noordbrabantsch kerkganger, 'Nog iets over het Hemelvaartsfeest', *Ibid.* 1874–20 (14 May 1874), 1–2; I. Hooykaas, 'Ingezonden stukken', *Ibid.* 1875–46 (18 November 1875), 3–4; F.C.A. Pantekoek, 'Ingezonden stukken', *Ibid.* 1875–48 (2 December 1875), 2–3; [H.C. Lohr], 'Hemelvaartsdag', *Ibid.* 1876–21 (25 May 1876), 2; A.G. van Hamel, 'Christelijke feesten', *Ibid.* 1879–20 (17 May 1879), 77–78; 'De weg naar boven', *Ibid.* 1881–21 (28 May 1881), 81–82. Later examples are: L. Knappert, *Onze Christelijke feestdagen* (Amsterdam [1890] 1908); H.T. de Graaf, 'Onze kerkelijke feestdagen', *Teekenen des Tijds* VIII (1906), 371–398.

to treat poor relief as a church affair. All of these elements of Remonstrant church life were considered by modernists like the Hugenholtz brothers to be remnants of an outmoded, supernatural view on how a community of faith should ideally be organised. The Hugenholtz brothers and their sympathisers might have joined the Remonstrant Brotherhood in order to purge it from these remnants, but they decided against this option as presumptuous and insincere. Besides, their experiences in the Dutch Reformed Church had convinced them that reforming an existing organisation from within was a hopeless task.³⁰

The biggest objection against joining the Remonstrant Brotherhood had to do with the dogmatic history of this church denomination and the effects of this on its rules and regulations. The Hugenholtz group thought that the Brotherhood was still based on the so-called 'Five Articles of Remonstrance',³¹ a 1611 document that, although toning down Calvinist teachings regarding the way humans are elected by God to attain eternal salvation, did not challenge such doctrines as predestination and salvation through Christ alone.³² In its articles of association adopted in 1861, the Remonstrant Brotherhood was called "a Christian church community in which the Gospel of Jesus Christ, in accordance with the Scriptures, is professed and preached in freedom and tolerance."³³ This formulation evoked associations with the ambiguously formulated rules of the Dutch Reformed Church. The reference to the "Gospel of Jesus" was both rather narrow, with its orthodox connotations, and indistinct. The phrase "in accordance with the Scriptures" was just as puzzling. Did the authors of the statement of principles of the Remonstrant Brotherhood enacted in 1861 mean to say that the said Scriptures – "*which* Scriptures," Hugenholtz added with feigned ignorance, "remains unclear" – are the sources through which the Gospel reaches man, or that church life should exclusively be based on these Scriptures? Hugenholtz did not doubt Remonstrants' com-

30 Cossee, 'De stichting van de Vrije Gemeente', 109–110.

31 'Binnenland – Meeting in de Keizerskroon', *Algemeen Handelsblad* L.14694 (11 November 1877), 1–2, here 1.

32 In a lecture held during a meeting of the *Vereeniging tot bevordering van zelfstandig godsdienstig leven*, on 20 November 1877, the Remonstrant minister J.W. Bok (1831–1889) countered this claim. He stated that the Remonstrant Brotherhood had never given any formal status to the Five Articles of Remonstrance and implied that there was no conflict between the principles of modernism and the principles on which the Brotherhood was based. See: J.W. Bok, *Is "de Remonstrantsche Broederschap op vijf Arminiaansche artikelen gegrond"? Toespraak, gehouden in de vereeniging "Zelfstandig godsdienstig leven" op 20 November 1877* (Amsterdam 1877), 24.

33 Barnard, *Van "verstoten kind" tot belijdende kerk*, 67–68.

mitment to a modernist way of believing, but abhorred phraseology that referred to their forefathers' supernaturalist worldview.³⁴ He reiterated this objection in 1879, when the aim of the Remonstrant Brotherhood was reformulated into the "advance[ment] of religious life, in accordance with its principle of freedom and tolerance, on the basis of the Gospel of Jesus Christ."³⁵ This phrasing resembled the of the NPB's aim of advancing the free development of religious life.

The second option the Hugenholtz brothers and their sympathisers had, finding shelter within the NPB, was never taken into serious consideration, although it seemed to be a rather obvious thing to do. After all, the NPB not only wanted to support churchgoing liberal Protestants, but also modernists who had broken with church life altogether. Moreover, its local branches enjoyed a high degree of autonomy, and those that offered religious services basically functioned as free congregations. Yet, as said before, they closely resembled denominational congregations both in structure and liturgy, and were not supposed to compete with such congregations. Apparently, these restrictions prevented the Amsterdam secessionists from organising themselves within the NPB: it was not their goal to reinforce the position of ecclesial modernism, but to have full freedom to shape a faith community without any church characteristics – freedom that neither the Remonstrant Brotherhood nor the NPB was able to fully give them. Moreover, they probably thought that it would be rather inconsistent to organise themselves under the auspices of an organisation that tried to strengthen the position of modernism within the denomination that they had just left.³⁶

Although the Hugenholtz brothers continued to be (highly) involved with the NPB, lecturing at its meetings and serving on its committees, they therefore decided not to constitute a new modernist faith community under the NPB flag. On 30 November 1877, they and their followers founded the independent Free Congregation. It held its first official religious gathering on 3 February 1878.³⁷ The Free Congregation was intended to be a radical break

34 Hugenholtz, Jr., 'De stichting der Vrije Gemeente te Amsterdam', 14–15.

35 Barnard, *Van "verstoten kind" tot belijdende kerk*, 74.

36 As P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr. later indicated, he felt that the development of NPB branches into church-like congregations in retrospect fully justified the decision to found the Free Congregation outside of the NPB. See: P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., 'Berichten, enz. – De Vrije Gemeente', *De Hervorming* 1906–13 (31 March 1906), 100; P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., *Afscheidswoord aan de leden en vrienden der Vrije Gemeente* (Amsterdam 1909), 15; Krijger, 'De Protestantenbond als kerk der toekomst', 16–17.

37 L. Knappert, *Godsdienstig Nederland* (Huis ter Heide 1928), 172–173; R. van den Boogaard, *De religieuze rebellen van de Vrije Gemeente. De vergeten oorsprong van Paradiso* (Amsterdam 2018), 43.

with traditional church life. Instead of asking for legal recognition as a religious denomination, its founders requested the government to recognise the Free Congregation as a 'regular' voluntary association. It was administrated by an executive committee instead of being governed by a consistory of a minister, elders, and deacons. These church offices were rejected as a matter of principle. The Free Congregation did have a permanent pastor, P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., but he was referred to as '*voorganger*' (literally: the one who conducts a service) instead of with the ecclesial term '*predikant*' ('reverend'). In so doing, the group stressed that the ministry did not require some kind of special 'ordination' or 'authorisation'. The Free Congregation did not need to have elders, as it did not try to discipline its members in doctrinal matters. For several reasons, it was decided not to appoint deacons either. The deaconry, responsible for assisting poor and needy members of a particular congregation, was a rather controversial institution in parts of the modernist movement. Some modernists, including the Hugenholtz brothers, were of the opinion that a community of faith should not concern itself with material matters, such as poor relief. Deacons only assisted fellow church members, giving the impression that like-mindedness was a prerequisite for being helped, and potentially giving (poor) people a wrong motive for joining a congregation. Obtaining membership in a community of faith and relieving the distress of the poor should, the first members of the Free Congregation felt, never be intertwined. These activities only had value if they were individual expressions of genuine religious belief. Social welfare work should only be conducted by non-church associations that supported anyone in need, regardless of his denominational affiliation and convictions about life.³⁸

The Free Congregation did not only break with existing church practices in the way it was structured, however. It got rid of everything that smacked of supernaturalism in its Sunday gatherings as well. Baptism and the Lord's Supper were seen as "too old-fashioned and too timeworn to be successfully regenerated."³⁹ These sacraments were believed to have no meaning whatsoever, not even a symbolic one, in a modern worldview and were hence abolished.⁴⁰ The

38 However, in the 1880s, an association affiliated to the Free Congregation, called '*De Helpende Hand*' ('The Helping Hand'), was founded that conducted welfare activities closely resembling church social welfare work. See: *Wat wil de Vrije Gemeente?* (s.l. s.a.), 8.

39 Cossee, 'De stichting van de Vrije Gemeente', 111. See also: Y. Hiemstra, 'Neem, eet, drink. Over het doen van religie', in: H.S. Benjamins, J. Offringa and W.H. Slob (eds.), *Liberaal christendom. Ervaren, doen, denken* (Vught 2016), 140-147, here 143-144.

40 'Onze leestafel – "Stemmen uit de Vrije Gemeente"', *De Hervorming* 1878-19 (11 May 1878), 4; 1878-20 (18 May 1878), 3-4; P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., 'Waarom geen doop?', *Stemmen uit de Vrije Gemeente* 1 (1878), 99-116; *Wat wil de Vrije Gemeente?*, 4-6.

same went for observance of Pentecost and Ascension Day.⁴¹ Christmas and Easter were preserved as festivals, as they were considered to be connected to the annual cycle of nature and the emotions that different stages of this cycle arouse in humans. Christmas was celebrated as the feast of light and the enlightenment of the mind. Easter was solemnised as the feast of regeneration and the triumph of Good over Evil. In addition, Reformation Day was celebrated in honour of the Protestant principle of liberty of conscience, of which the Free Congregation claimed to be the purest expression.⁴² Instead of a sermon, a lecture that was supposed to arouse 'religious feelings' was the central point of Sunday gatherings. Such a lecture did not have to be exclusively based on a biblical text. To quote P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr.:

We do not limit ourselves to the Bible. The entire Bible of mankind lies open in front of us! We wish to be inspired by the hymns of Indians and Persians, the proverbs of Buddha and Confucius, the wisdom of Greeks and Romans. Augustine and Schleiermacher, Luther and Schiller, Shakespeare and [Theodore] Parker, Spinoza, and [Joost van den] Vondel and . . . so many other great and good people, who all praise, in their own language, the magnificent works of God.⁴³

As this statement indicates, the Free Congregation had, notwithstanding its Protestant roots, strong universalistic tendencies. The upright and idealistic attitude of life after which all sincere Truth-seekers aspired might be most clearly personified in the figure of Jesus the Nazarene,⁴⁴ but the founders of the Free Congregation thought it was worth listening to virtuous voices outside of the Christian tradition as well. In every expression of religious life, they believed, something of the divine shines through. Yet such receptiveness went hand in hand with criticism of religion. Because all existing religions were inextricable mixtures of divine inspiration and human imagination, none of these could be the basic constituent of a universal religion. By inciting people to search for elements of Truth in all faiths, the Free Congregation wanted to contribute to the origination of this universal religion, "to the development of the spiritual Volapük, which will enable all nations to understand the com-

41 'Binnenland – Amsterdam', *De Hervorming* 1878-01 (5 January 1878), 2; Hugenholtz, Jr., 'De stichting der Vrije Gemeente te Amsterdam', 36.

42 J.H. Gunning, *Het protestantsche Nederland onzer dagen. Uit een kerkelijk-godsdienstig oogpunt beschouwd en historisch toegelicht* (Groningen 1899), 136.

43 Hugenholtz, Jr., 'De stichting der Vrije Gemeente te Amsterdam', 31.

44 Ph.R. Hugenholtz, 'Het christelijk karakter onzer vroomheid', *Stemmen uit de Vrije Gemeente* 1 (1878), 62-82, here 65-67.

mon language of Freedom, Fraternity, and Character in religion, which will overcome all barriers raised up by seas and creeds, and unite all human beings into the general brotherhood of the family of mankind.”⁴⁵

However, a dogmatic mentality on the one hand and a materialistic attitude to life on the other had to be challenged before this universal religion could ever come into being. Instilling a liberal mentality into the generations of the future was therefore a priority of the Free Congregation.⁴⁶ Passing on biblical knowledge to youngsters was particularly important, because familiarity with Old and New Testament stories was seen as a necessity if they were to understand and fully appreciate ‘civilised’ culture and cultivate pure religious insights and feelings,⁴⁷ but religious education should entail more than that. It should also make adolescents acquainted with non-Christian wisdom and help them to reflect upon burning social questions as high-principled individuals. Becoming a member was not, as it was in the churches, seen as the expected result of a successful completion of confirmation classes; one could become a member without having received religious education. Contrary to (Dutch Reformed) church life, no distinction was made between male and female members; women also had a say in affairs concerning the entire congregation.⁴⁸ All of this makes clear that the Free Congregation saw itself as the ‘experimental garden’ where the faith community of the future was shaped. Its founders and members had no doubt whatsoever that it was the prototype after which all religious institutions would ultimately be modeled. Although *De Hervorming* suggested that many modernists would (ultimately) follow the Hugenholtz brothers’ example, the founding of the Free Congregation in Amsterdam was not copied elsewhere in the Netherlands.⁴⁹

45 P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., *Licht en schaduw. Indrukken van het godsdienstig leven in Amerika* (Amsterdam 1888), 78. Volapük is an artificial language that had some popularity in the late nineteenth century.

46 Hugenholtz, Jr., ‘De stichting der Vrije Gemeente te Amsterdam’, 30.

47 Hugenholtz, Jr., *Afscheidswoord*, 14.

48 *Wat wil de Vrije Gemeente?*, 5, 20.

49 [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘1878’, *De Hervorming* 1878-01 (5 January 1878), 1. A free congregation, modelled after the one in Amsterdam, came into being in The Hague in 1918. After falling apart, in 1946, it was reinstituted as an annex to the Free Congregation in Amsterdam in 1958. In 1984, a second annex opened its doors in the region of Twente. See: *Vrije Gemeente te 's-Gravenhage* (s.l. 1918); ‘De tweede Vrije Gemeente’, *Nieuwe Stemmen uit de Vrije Gemeente* 1.6 (1918), 4-6; ‘De Haagsche Vrije Gemeente’, *Ibid.* 1.7 (1918), 11-13; 1.8 (1918), 7-8; S. Hofstra, ‘De nieuwere religieuze bewegingen in ons land’, *Mensch en Maatschappij* 111.6 (1927), 519-543, here 528; ‘Vrije Gemeente-kring Den Haag opgericht’, *Algemeen Handelsblad* CXXX.42561 (18 February 1958), 2; Hoekstra and Ipenburg, *Handboek Christelijk Nederland*, 307-309.

Although the founding of other free congregations outside of Amsterdam did not occur at the time, the ideal of at least loosening the bonds between congregations within the Dutch Reformed Church in particular was, as said before, rather widespread among modernists in the 1870s and 1880s. Kuyperians shared that ideal.⁵⁰ In 1873, Kuyper and Ph.R. Hugenholtz had been members of a committee that suggested splitting the unitary Dutch Reformed congregation in Amsterdam into several sub-parishes, in an attempt to give all church factions the freedom to run their own affairs.⁵¹ While he applauded the Hugenholtz brothers for voluntarily leaving the Dutch Reformed Church in 1877, because he saw them as modernists who candidly acknowledged that modernism did not belong in the Dutch Reformed Church, and as he hoped that their secession would be the beginning of a thorough reconfessionalisation of the entire denomination,⁵² Kuyper would come to the conclusion that it was best for him and his followers to cut through the bond that kept the Dutch Reformed congregations together as well. Although they claimed to be the doctrinally pure and hence legitimate continuation of the church of the Reformation in the Netherlands, their decision to 'go into *Doleantie*' (to renounce the authority of the Dutch Reformed synod) in 1886 and subsequent years ultimately came down to the same thing as the Hugenholtz brothers had done nine years beforehand: they seceded from the Dutch Reformed Church.⁵³ Due to this similarity, A.J. Rasker typifies the founding of the Free Congregation in retrospect as a "*Doleantie* to the left."⁵⁴ Just like P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., who had implied that the Free Congregation could become part of a larger denomination consisting of similar religiously liberal congregations,⁵⁵ Kuyper advocated the formation of an alliance of congregations on the basis of doctrinal like-mindedness,⁵⁶ leading to the formation of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands in 1892.

50 Nijenhuis, 'De Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk en de Doleantie', 185-187.

51 This committee had drawn up regulations regarding the formation of sub-parishes, which are integrally published in: A. Kuyper and F.L. Rutgers, *Contra-memorie in zake het Amsterdamsch conflict* (Amsterdam 1886), 70-72.

52 [A. Kuyper], 'De aftocht der gebroeders Hugenholtz', *De Standaard* VI.1722 (2 November 1877), 1.

53 Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* 111, 43-45; K.M. Witteveen, 'Het modernisme en de Doleantie', *Documentatieblad voor de Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis na 1800* XXII/XXIII (1986), 53-56.

54 Rasker, *De Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk*, 217; Klooster, *Het vrijzinnig protestantisme in Nederland*, 47.

55 Hugenholtz, Jr., *Waarom gaan wij heen?*, 35-36.

56 A. Kuyper, *Tractaat van de reformatie der kerken*, 77-80; D. Deddens, 'De kerken van de Doleantie', in: W. van 't Spijker and L.C. van Drimmelen (eds.), *Inleiding tot de studie van het kerkrecht* (Kampen 1992), 134-145.

3 Disappointment and Renewed Appreciation for the Institution of the Church

The fact that the founding of the Free Congregation in Amsterdam proved to be a one-time event led to disappointment among those modernists who thought that such free congregations would eventually replace the church as the common organisational form of religious communities. At the 1880 annual NPB meeting, the Dutch Reformed theologian H.U. Meyboom (1842-1933), one of the most passionate advocates of the ideal of the free congregation, gave vent to this disillusionment. In his eyes, all churches, including those with a modernist character, were based on the presumptuous belief that they represented or realised the Kingdom of God on earth, in which they shrouded themselves with a false aura of exceptionality and sanctity by accepting new-borns and new members into their midst during ritualistic, ostentatious ceremonies. He had hoped that the founding of the Free Congregation would mark the beginning of the ultimate eradication of this “ecclesial untruth,” but, to his sorrow, “a lack of enthusiasm” had restrained modernists outside the Dutch capital from following the Hugenholtz brothers’ example.⁵⁷ Also in 1880, Rauwenhoff expressed himself in a similar vein in the *Theologisch Tijdschrift*. Evaluating, among other things, the question of the realisation of the views on church reform that he had set forth in 1867, he noted that nothing had changed and, consequently, dropped his hope that the church could ever be reformed from within. The only way to create the conditions needed for religious life to be thoroughly regenerated was to “restore the true congregation – the original, the only genuine form of religious life. The true congregation, that is to say the community life of kindred spirits, based on freedom and self-determination.” However, he did not harbour any illusions about a successful reconfiguration of the existing denominational landscape into such free congregations: he expected to meet with little sympathy from his fellow modernists. Alluding to the apparent unwillingness of most modernists to experiment with new forms of religious communities outside the existing churches, he complained: “it seems

57 [H.U. Meyboom in:] ‘Tiende jaarfeest van den Nederlandschen Protestantenvbond te Deventer gevierd’, *De Hervorming* 1880-46 (13 November 1880), 181-183, here 182. At the meeting of modern theologians in 1922, Meyboom explicitly stated that it was not just a lack of enthusiasm, but a general lack of *reform-mindedness* among modernists that had caused the latter to keep existing church structures as they were. See: F. Dijkema, ‘In den stroom – Vergadering van moderne theologen’, *De Stroom* 1.21 (6 May 1922), 2.

to me that most [modernists] think and search in another direction than I do.”⁵⁸

Several years later, in 1885, another supporter of free congregations joined the ranks of the disillusioned. In the article with which he took leave of his editorship of *De Hervorming*, F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr. told his readers that the events that had occurred in the Protestant domain in the recent past, including the limited support the Hugenholtz brothers had received in 1877 and subsequent years, were a disappointment to him. Yet, instead of becoming defeatist, he had gradually adapted his expectations to the reality that the Free Congregation in Amsterdam had not created a precedent. Hugenholtz still believed in the ideal of the free congregation – accentuated by his projected career as a pastor of such a congregation in Grand Rapids –, but he now argued that secessionism was not something to strive for. The Dutch Reformed Church should not be handed over to orthodoxy, as the continued presence of modernists in its midst could be “salutary for the church itself and our nation.” There was no reason for modernists who suffered from confessionalist high-handedness to resign their membership of the Dutch Reformed Church, as the NPB could give them shelter and could simultaneously serve as a fortified bunker from which they could combat the assaults of their orthodox fellow church members.⁵⁹

Van Loenen Martinet was more defeatist. On the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Free Congregation, in 1887, he professed regret that the “brilliant future” of which it had been a foreshadowing had not come true. According to him, the Hugenholtz brothers had pointed out the direction in which the modernist movement should have gone. Yet, because modernists did not have the courage or the decisiveness to take that direction in the last ten years, Van Loenen Martinet questioned whether they would be able to create new communities of their own when – not if – orthodoxy had permanently expelled them from the churches.⁶⁰ To him, nothing seemed to indicate that

58 L.W.E. Rauwenhoff, ‘Idealisme zonder ideaal’, *Theologisch Tijdschrift* XIV (1880), 1-26, here 23-24. In response to Rauwenhoff’s 1880 article, W. Zaalberg argued that most modernists continued to cling to the institution of the church, because a better type of organisation in which they could spread their principles had yet to be found, because the majority of the Dutch people remained attached to church life, and because they still cherished the hope that they could reform church life within its existing structures. See: W. Zaalberg, *Realisme of idealisme zonder ideaal? Naar aanleiding van prof. Rauwenhoff’s stuk “Idealisme zonder ideaal”* (Tiel 1880), 20-21.

59 F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr., ‘Binnenland – Ten afscheid’, *De Hervorming* 1885-39 (26 September 1885), 154-155, here 155.

60 [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Na tien jaren’, *Ibid.* 1887-49 (3 December 1887), 194-195, here 195.

the modernist movement was willing to make the efforts necessary to reform church life, which in its current form severely hindered the development of modernism.

Just one year before he wrote the above words, Van Loenen Martinet had cherished the hope that a thorough reformation of church life was finally underway. The *Doleantie* had created the momentum for this. Van Loenen Martinet was not the only modernist to think in this way; among those modernists who upheld the ideal of the free congregation, there was a good deal of sympathy for Kuypers' views on how church life should be structured. After all, just like they themselves, Kuypers did not want to preserve the existing denominational structure of the Dutch Reformed Church and was therefore someone with whom they could talk about a peaceful division of church property. For that reason, F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr. had praised Kuypers for founding the Free University in Amsterdam in 1880, seeing it as a prelude to the foundation of a free orthodox Calvinist Church and thus to the dissolution of the Dutch Reformed Church along factional lines.⁶¹ When the first Kuypersian-minded congregations decided to no longer accept the authority of the Dutch Reformed synod, Van Loenen Martinet reacted with similar enthusiasm; now, the opportunity to reorganise ecclesial structures and to resolve the ongoing church conflicts once and for all had presented itself. Modernists should seize this opportunity, which could free them from the galling bonds that hindered their movement from growing and flourishing. With the *Doleantie*, Van Loenen Martinet felt, not only were modernist self-interests at stake, but also the triumph of justice, both in a legal and in a moral sense. The *Doleantie* was a cry of conscience, as the Kuypersians could not live by their principles accepting the Dutch Reformed Church as it was. The *Doleantie* was thus a morally legitimate act and its supporters were consequently fully entitled to lay claim to a proportional part of the material belongings of the Dutch Reformed Church.⁶² In turn, this denomination, Van Loenen Martinet further argued, ethically disqualified itself by its act of striking from its books the names of members who had – in his eyes – valid grievances against its organisation.⁶³ H. Vrendenberg Cz. agreed. Expelling Kuypers and his sympathisers was not a principled thing

61 [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'Binnenland – Opening van de Vrije Universiteit', *De Hervorming* 1880-43 (23 October 1880), 170-171, here 171.

62 [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Waarom?', *Ibid.* 1887-26 (25 June 1887), 102; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland', *Ibid.* 1887-30 (23 July 1887), 118. See also: P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., 'Kerk en maatschappij doleerende', *Stemmen uit de Vrije Gemeente* x (1887), 33-45, here 34-35.

63 [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland', *De Hervorming* 1886-31 (31 July 1886), 125; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Wat is de vraag?', *Ibid.* 1887-28 (9 July 1887), 110-111.

to do and would not settle the factional struggle that had been raging within the Dutch Reformed Church for so long. Rather, a peaceful and hence ethically 'correct' separation should be sought, which could only be found if all anti-Kuyperians were willing to negotiate with the Kuyperians. Frenetically trying to keep heterogeneous groups together was not in the interest of any of these groups, Vrendenberg concluded.⁶⁴

However, the great majority of modernists, abhorring Kuyperian demagoguery and seeing the *Doleantie* as an expression of intolerant fanaticism, made common cause with Kuyper's orthodox and moderately orthodox opponents. Van Loenen Martinet and others, such as W. Zaalberg and the minister-entrepreneur E.J.F. van Dissel (1827-1922), for their part, warned these modernists not to be fooled by the circumstances of the moment: as soon as the current ecclesial storm died down, non-modernists would resume their attempt to purge the Dutch Reformed Church from modernism.⁶⁵ In 1889, after a secular judge had definitively rejected all of the Kuyperians' claims to church property, Van Loenen Martinet therefore called it a missed chance that most modernists had taken sides against Kuyper: "modernists have not given the *gereformeerden* the chance to be themselves within the [existing] denominational boundaries, within the existing administrative structure. As a result, they have thrown away the chance to create a similar opportunity [the opportunity to live up to their principles within the Dutch Reformed Church, *TK*] for themselves." In fact, the *Doleantie* could have been averted altogether if modernists had not been indifferent and had ardently striven for a *modus vivendi* – which Kuyper himself had proposed as a halfway stage towards a harmonious dissolution of the Dutch Reformed Church – prior to 1886. Instead, most modernists apparently believed that the voluntary or forced exodus of Kuyperians would be a blessing for them.⁶⁶ Van Loenen Martinet was right to see this as

64 H. Vrendenberg Cz., 'De maatregelen tegen de doleerenden en de mogelijkheid van een minnelijk uiteengaan', *De Hervorming* 1887-32 (6 August 1887), 126; 1887-33 (13 August 1887), 130; H. Vrendenberg Cz., 'Art. 11 en het doleeren', *Ibid.* 1887-38 (17 September 1887), 150; H. Vrendenberg Cz., 'Ingezonden stukken – Uitbannen of scheiden?', *Ibid.* 1887-43 (22 October 1887), 171-172.

65 [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Een dreigend gevaar', *Ibid.* 1886-04 (23 January 1886), 14-15, here 15; W. Zaalberg, 'Staat in de vrijheid', *Ibid.* 1886-09 (27 February 1886), 33-34, here 33; V.D., 'Ingezonden stukken', *Ibid.* 1886-52 (25 December 1886), 210; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Uit de hoofdstad', *Ibid.* 1887-01 (1 January 1887), 3; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Uitgebracht!', *Ibid.* 1887-10 (5 March 1887), 39; E.J.F. van Dissel, 'Ingezonden stukken', *Ibid.* 1887-13 (26 March 1887), 51; 1887-17 (23 April 1887), 68. See also: Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* 111, 43-44; Witteveen, 'Het modernisme en de Doleantie', 54-55.

66 [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Toch een leuze', *De Hervorming* 1889-02 (12 January 1889), 7.

a miscalculation; his expectation that the factional struggle within the Dutch Reformed Church would quickly recommence proved to be true.

Among those who believed in the ideal of the free congregation, there was also unhappiness over the exodus of Dutch Reformed modernists to other denominations, particularly the Remonstrant Brotherhood. In some places, this exodus took such proportions that entirely new Remonstrant congregations came into existence. This was the case in Arnhem and Groningen in 1878, in Lochem and Meppel in 1879, in Doesburg in 1884, in Hoogeveen in 1886, in Dordrecht in 1897, and in Vlaardingen in 1908.⁶⁷ The influx of Dutch Reformed modernists into the community of Mennonites and the Evangelical Lutheran Church had, with some notable exceptions,⁶⁸ a more incidental character and was therefore considerably smaller.⁶⁹ For Dutch Reformed modernists, these denominations exerted less attraction than the Remonstrant Brotherhood, because Mennonites practised adult baptism, which determined the cultural atmosphere in their communities,⁷⁰ and because modernists were not much better off in the Lutheran Church, which also had a large orthodox bloc. Modernist opinion leaders such as F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr. and H.U. Meyboom complained that an interdenominational circulation of modernists did not help the modernist movement in any way. They repeatedly stressed that while the Remonstrant Brotherhood might welcome modernists with open arms, it was still a *church* in the traditional sense of the word.⁷¹ Moreover, as Hugenholtz explained, the founding of a free congregation would have much more impact than the establishment of a Remonstrant one, as it would create “a shock throughout the country” and might accordingly set a process of reform in motion. Every religious movement needed to have a catchy, expressive

67 Several publications deal with the history of these Remonstrant congregations. They are listed separately in the bibliography.

68 M.J. van Lennep, ‘De lutherse gemeente te Harlingen’, *Samen Leven. Jaarboek van de evangelisch-lutherse zendingsraad* 1 (1975), 476–481, here 478; E.H. Cossee, ‘De doopsgezinden en de opkomst van het modernisme in Nederland’, *Doopsgezinde Bijdragen. Nieuwe reeks* XX (1994), 219–239, here 234.

69 J.W. Pont, *De Luthersche Kerk in Nederland* (Baarn 1908), 45–46; D. Drijver, *Kerk en kerkgaan* VIII. *De Lutherschen* (Huis ter Heide 1930), 11.

70 Cossee, ‘De doopsgezinden en de opkomst van het modernisme in Nederland’, 230; P. Post, *Geschiedenis van het doopsgezinde kerklied (1793–1973). Van particularisme naar oecumeniciteit* (Hilversum 2010), 153; A.G. Hoekema and S. Voolstra, *De doopsgezinden. Geschiedenis, geloofsleer, organisatie* (Kampen 1999), 25.

71 ‘Onze leestafel’, *De Hervorming* 1878–18 (4 May 1878) 3–4, here 4; H.U. Meyboom, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1879–17 (26 April 1879), 70; [H.U. Meyboom in:] L. Mees, ‘Onze leestafel’, *Ibid.* 1881–30 (30 July 1881), 11–12. The orthodox Reformed minister H.V. Hogerzeil urged modernists to take this into account when thinking about joining the Remonstrant Brotherhood. See: H.V. Hogerzeil, *Naar de Remonstrantsche Broederschap? Godsdienstige volkslezing, gehouden 8 Maart 1878 in het Nuts-Gebouw* (Arnhem 1878), 11–21.

name in order to captivate the masses. The term 'Remonstrant' could not be that name, as it referred to past events with no significance for the present day.⁷² Meyboom agreed with Hugenholtz that a move by modernists from the Dutch Reformed Church to the Remonstrant Brotherhood should be rejected for reasons of principle: a true reformation of church life could not be effected by grafting new branches onto an old tree, but only by beginning something entirely new – that is, by creating new, free communities of faith.⁷³

Hugenholtz and Meyboom's disappointment about the loss of Dutch Reformed modernists to other denominations was shared by another group of modernists. These, however, did not uphold the ideal of the free congregation, but the opposite ideal of the preservation of the Dutch Reformed Church as a *volkskerk*. This term is hard to translate into English. Literally meaning 'people's church', the term denotes an ecclesiological concept that circulated among both the non-Kuyperian orthodox and liberal members of the Dutch Reformed Church. For the former, the concept of the *volkskerk* referred to the idea that the Dutch Reformed Church was the ecclesial embodiment of the singularity of the Dutch *volk* or nation. As such, it had stamped the general cultural climate in the Netherlands and deserved to have a privileged position in Dutch society. The characteristic religious spirit of the Dutch nation was expressed in the Three Forms of Unity, on which the Dutch Reformed Church had been founded at the end of the sixteenth century. To preserve the unique character of the Dutch nation, the Dutch Reformed Church consequently had to stick to the Three Forms of Unity. For Dutch Reformed modernists, by contrast, the *volkskerk* meant something else. Every Dutchman or Dutchwoman who cherished the principle of freedom of conscience, the principle of which the Dutch Reformed Church was said to be the patron, should be welcome in this denomination, regardless of his or her specific religious convictions. In a nutshell: for some orthodox, the Dutch Reformed *volkskerk* was the church *for* the people, while for some modernists, it was the church *of* the people.⁷⁴ The latter argued that every modernist who left the Dutch Reformed Church – either to join another denomination or to become entirely churchless – ac-

72 [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'Naar de remonstranten?', *De Hervorming* 1878-25 (22 June 1878), 1-2, here 1.

73 [H.U. Meyboom in:] 'Tiende jaarfeest van den Nederlandschen Protestantenbond te Deventer gevierd', *Ibid.* 1880-46 (13 November 1880), 181-183, here 182. Repeating this ideal a year later, Meyboom made clear that he deeply regretted that the NPB had not come to replace denominational church life. See: H.U. Meyboom, *De oude kerken en de nieuwe tijd* (Amsterdam 1881), 57, 66-67.

74 H. Noordegraaf, 'Volkskerk', in: Harinck, Paul and Wallet (eds.), *Het gereformeerde geheugen*, 481-492. For an account of the differences between confessionalist and modernist interpretations of the *volkskerk*, written from an orthodox perspective, see: P.J. Kromsig, *Tweeërlei volkskerk* (Amsterdam 1915), 4-5, 12, 21, 23-25, 31-33.

ted reprehensibly, as he contributed to the weakening of the *volkskerk*. After all, to be the church *of* the people, the Dutch Reformed Church could not do without a large and influential modernist segment.

In reaction to the aforementioned speech that H.U. Meyboom delivered at the 1880 annual NPB meeting, the minister A.J. Oort (1838-1917) provided a good expression of the modernist rationale behind the idea of the *volkskerk*. Oort was not the first to defend modernists' presence in the Dutch Reformed Church – Kuenen, for example, had already done the same in his 1866 pamphlet *Het goed recht der modernen* (*Modernists' Perfect Right*)⁷⁵ – nor was he the first modernist to express the ideal of the *volkskerk*,⁷⁶ but his response to Meyboom showed that a gradual alteration was beginning to take place in modernist public opinion regarding the institution of the church. Previously, those who believed that modernism inherently entailed a strong impetus for the creation of free congregations – whether within the Dutch Reformed Church or outside of it – were the ones who were most vocal within the modernist movement. Yet, slowly in the 1880s and increasingly in the 1890s, that role came to be assumed by modernists who wanted to preserve existing ecclesial institutions, particularly the Dutch Reformed Church, as *volkskerk*. According to Oort, free congregations could form an administrative alliance, but such a bond would never be durable. If denominational life were to be replaced with free congregations, people who did not want to side with any faction would be forced to choose. Moreover, congregations consisting only of like-minded individuals would be breeding grounds of pedantry, exclusivism, and consequently new conflicts. Over against this rather uninviting prospect, Oort held up the image of the Dutch Reformed Church: it was large, it had members from all social classes, and symbolised 'Dutchness'.⁷⁷ The minister A. Carlier (1840-1906) had made a similar statement earlier that year. In contrast to autonomous congregations, a large and powerful Dutch Reformed Church was able to support congregations in need, found new congregations, spread genuine religious principles in the Netherlands and abroad, relieve the poor, and even produce "works of visual and musical art" that could help people "develop their inner

75 A. Kuenen, *Het goed recht der modernen* (Leiden 1866). Kuenen's brochure was one of many in which modernists' ecclesial rights were defended. These brochures are listed separately in the bibliography.

76 In 1877, for example, the Dutch Reformed minister M.A. de Jongh (1843-1879) stated that he preferred the Dutch Reformed Church as *volkskerk* to a disintegration of the Dutch Reformed Church along factional lines. See: M.A. de Jongh, 'Contra', *De Hervorming* 1877-43 (27 October 1877), 2-3, here 2. [Erroneously, the initials 'M.H.' are used.]

77 [A.J. Oort in:] 'Tiende jaarfeest van den Nederlandschen Protestantenvbond te Deventer gevierd', *Ibid.* 1880-46 (13 November 1880), 181-183, here 182.

lives.”⁷⁸ At the height of the *Doleantie* crisis, Carlier reiterated his belief “that a big, powerful *volkskerk* [. . .] is most preferable.”⁷⁹ Others, such as J. Knappert and C.G. Chavannes, cherished the same ideal and stated, in line with Carlier, that they were glad that the Dutch Reformed synod did not yield an inch to the supporters of the *Doleantie*; in the Dutch Reformed *volkskerk*, peace and quiet should not be disturbed by intolerant zealots who proactively tried to bend things to their dogmatic will.⁸⁰

Voices such as these, defending the preservation of the institution of the Dutch Reformed Church, came to the fore after 1886. This was a direct consequence of the *Doleantie*: with the *volkskerk* under assault by a movement that intended to destroy it, those modernists who wanted to preserve it needed to cling to it with increased fervour. Although, as became clear some years after its eruption, the *Doleantie* did not free the Dutch Reformed Church from confessionalist thinking and did not, in the long run, put an end to orthodox attempts to chase modernists away, modernist supporters of the *volkskerk* ideal saw no reason to aim for a dissolution of the Dutch Reformed Church. Even F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr., a champion of free congregations, admitted in 1888 that he had never felt compelled to actually break with the Dutch Reformed Church, as the Dutch Reformed congregation to which he had belonged “in practice already functioned as a free congregation. Members of this congregation who had convictions that differed from the majority had plenty of opportunities to satisfy their religious needs elsewhere in the immediate vicinity.” Many smaller congregations were simply not in a position to reconstitute themselves on a nondenominational basis, because they “could not do without the spiritual and material support that they received as Dutch Reformed congregations.”⁸¹

78 A. Carlier, ‘Geen kerspelvorming’, *De Hervorming* 1880-13 (27 March 1880), 51.

79 A. Carlier, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Nogmaals de taak der kerk’, *Ibid.* 1886-44 (30 October 1886), 177. See also: A. Carlier, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1887-07 (12 February 1887), 27-28.

80 J. Knappert, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1887-03 (15 January 1887), 11; [C.G. Chavannes in: J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – De modernen en de kerkelijke strijd’, *Ibid.* 1887-15 (9 April 1887), 59. Knappert emphasised that the editorials in *De Hervorming* dealing with the aftermath of the *Doleantie* were not representative of the modernist faction in the Dutch Reformed Church: many Reformed liberals, he argued, did not share Van Loenen Martinet’s hope of a permanent disintegration of the Dutch Reformed Church along factional lines. See: [J. Knappert in: J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Het kerkelijk vraagstuk in “De Hervorming”’, *Ibid.* 1886-46 (13 November 1886), 185.

81 [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr. in:] ‘Onze leestafel – “De weg waarlangs God ons leidde”’, *Ibid.* 1888-20 (19 May 1888), 80. See also: *De weg waarlangs God ons leidde. Herinneringen uit zijn vijf-en-twintig jarige loopbaan, uitgesproken voor zijne gemeente op zondag 28 Januari 1888, te Grand Rapids, Michigan* (Grand Rapids [1888]).

The aftermath of the *Doleantie* not only increased the number of those who defended the *volkskerk*, it also raised the hope among Reformed liberals that modernists could once again make their influence felt within the Dutch Reformed Church. In the early 1890s, for the first time in years, church council elections in a few congregations did indeed result in modernist victories. Those who upheld the free congregation ideal, such as Van Loenen Martinet and P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., could not appreciate this development, as it only further delayed the dissolution of the Dutch Reformed Church that they deemed necessary and inevitable,⁸² but *volkskerk*-minded modernists were given a boost by it. Those electoral victories might stimulate modernists all across the country to become more involved with Dutch Reformed church life and proved that there was no urgency whatsoever for modernists to leave the Dutch Reformed Church. When, in the course of the 1890s, the orthodox who did not go along with the *Doleantie* renewed their fight against modernism with renewed fervour, the dominant reaction within modernist circles was not one of resignation or indifference, as it had been from the mid-1870s onwards, but rather of heightened combativeness. The polemical spirit and self-confidence of the 1860s and early 1870s gradually resurged.⁸³ The Dutch Reformed modernists who upheld the ideal of the *volkskerk* not only argued that non-Reformed modernists had no good reason not to join their ranks, since their denomination was broad enough to incorporate groups with different identities, but also felt that these *should* join their ranks, in order to enlarge the modernist bloc within the Dutch Reformed Church to make it effective enough to prevent confessionalists from getting their way.⁸⁴ The number of journal articles written by *volkskerk*-minded liberals, in whose eyes the founding of the Free Congregation in Amsterdam and the 'defection' of modernists to other denominations were monumental errors, increased every year, un-

82 [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Ons antwoord aan prof. Knappert', *De Hervorming* 1889-30 (27 July 1889), 118; P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., 'Een openingswoord', *Stemmen uit de Vrije Gemeente* xv (1892), 1-12, here 8; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland', *De Hervorming* 1894-43 (27 October 1894), 171.

83 Around 1900, a growing number of brochures were published in which modernists' interests in the Dutch Reformed Church were defended. Examples are: C. Hille Ris Lambers, *Heeft de orthodoxie recht op de handhaving der belijdenis aan te dringen?* ([Leiden 1897]); Van Manen, *Wat nu?*; B.D. Eerdman, *Het recht der vrijzinnigen in de Nederlandsche Hervormde Kerk en de zoogenaamde orthodoxie* (Leiden 1901); L. Knappert, *Overmacht of recht? Een woord tot allen, die belangstellen in de Ned. Herv. Kerk* (Leiden 1905).

84 E.g.: W.C. van Manen, 'Het fatale fragment', *De Hervorming* 1897-46 (13 November 1897), 182; W. Zaalberg, 'Nog eens bondsplicht', *Ibid.* 1897-51 (18 December 1897), 201-202.

til finally, at the 1903 NPB meeting, the feeling “that those modernists who have left the Dutch Reformed Church have acted wrongfully and that unification instead of dispersion of Reformed liberals should be strived for” came to prevail. B.W. Colenbrander, whose statement this is, recognised this as a significant and positive turn within modernist public opinion: “if someone would have voiced this sentiment ten years ago, he would have met with fierce opposition. But at the moment, there were no protests. This proves that better convictions [regarding the institution of the church, ТК] have taken root.”⁸⁵

Modernist Lutherans, Remonstrants, and Mennonites, some of whom had previously been Dutch Reformed themselves, were not against a strengthening of the modernist segment in the Dutch Reformed Church as such, but did not favour coalescing within the walls of this church denomination. Their right to exist as separate communities was questioned by *volkskerk*-minded Reformed modernists, but their self-awareness was higher than it had been a couple of decades before. The influx of liberals from the Dutch Reformed Church had contributed to this in two ways. First, it had fed the sentiment among non-Reformed modernists that the existence of their communities of faith was both legitimate and necessary. In the first half of the nineteenth century, prior to the emergence of the modernist movement, the number of Remonstrants and Mennonites had reached a historic low,⁸⁶ which had had dramatic repercussions on their self-image. In 1834, for example, the Remonstrant theologian A. des Amorie van der Hoeven (1798-1855) had suggested a hope for a reunification of the Remonstrant Brotherhood with the Dutch Reformed Church.⁸⁷ Around 1900, however, such a sentiment had become passé:⁸⁸ the number of Remonstrants had quadrupled in the second half of the nineteenth century from approximately 3,000 to 12,000.⁸⁹ Instead of hoping to be accepted into the Dutch Reformed Church, and consequently to dissolve their own church denomination, Remonstrants now self-confidently claimed that all true Protestants could feel truly at home only in their Brotherhood.⁹⁰

85 Cyriacus [B.W. Colenbrander], ‘Uit de kerkelijke wereld’, *De Hervorming* 1903-05 (31 January 1903), 35-36, here 36.

86 J. van Eijnatten, *Liberty and Concord in the United Provinces. Religious Toleration and the Public in the Eighteenth-Century Netherlands* (Leiden and Boston 2003), 23.

87 E.H. Cossee, *Abraham des Amorie van der Hoeven 1798-1855. Een remonstrants theoloog in de Biedermeiertijd* (Kampen 1988), 101-102.

88 L. Knappert, ‘De historische verklaring der gehechtheid aan eigen kerkgenootschap’, *Nieuw Theologisch Tijdschrift* xv (1926), 181-195, here 192.

89 Barnard, *Van “verstoten kind” tot belijdende kerk*, 110.

90 *Ibid.*, 235.

Second, those who had been ‘converts’ from the Dutch Reformed Church were not inclined to go back to the denomination they had left, and defended their ‘conversion’ by sharply contrasting the qualities of their new ecclesial homes with the deficiencies of their old ones. As early as 1879, Meyboom had noticed with a mixture of amazement and disapproval that new, formerly Dutch Reformed Remonstrants were the most militant defendants of the Remonstrant Brotherhood.⁹¹ To advocates of the *volkskerk*, Remonstrants and Mennonites replied that whereas modernists had to constantly beat off orthodox attacks in the Dutch Reformed Church, their own congregations were liberal oases.⁹² And to supporters of free congregations, Remonstrants in particular responded that the ideal of the free congregation was already realised in their own denominations.⁹³ Self-assuredly, they objected to anyone who questioned their right to exist.

4 Ecclesial Competition and Introversion

The *volkskerk*-mindedness that became dominant in Reformed modernist public opinion on the one hand, and the reinvigorated self-awareness of non-Reformed modernists on the other, had significant consequences both for the interrelationships within the modernist movement and modernists’ willingness to structurally reform existing church life. Whereas in the 1860s and 1870s, modernists had generally acknowledged the necessity of interdenominational collaboration and some had even hoped that denominational boundaries would ultimately fade away, they now began to stress their particularities and to see each other as competitors. The existing ecclesial divisions of modernists was no longer seen as a relic with a mere historical significance; instead, modernists in the Dutch Reformed Church, the Lutheran Church, the Remonstrant Brotherhood, and the Mennonite Society all called history as a witness

91 H.U. Meyboom, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *De Hervorming* 1879-15 (12 April 1879), 62.

92 E.g.: C., ‘Binnenland – Uit de Doopsgezinde Broederschap’, *Ibid.* 1879-39 (27 September 1879), 155; 1879-40 (4 October 1879), 158-159, here 159; [C.P. Tiele in:] ‘De kerkelijke strijd te Amsterdam’, *Ibid.* 1886-20 (15 May 1886), 77-78, here 78; ‘Binnenland – Uit een correspondentie’, *Ibid.* 1890-31 (2 August 1890), 122; H.Y. Groenewegen, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Een nieuwe Remonstrantsche Gemeente’, *Ibid.* 1897-42 (16 October 1897), 167-168, here 168; B. Tideman Jz., ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1897-44 (30 October 1897), 175; [S. Cramer in:] J.N. Wiersma, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Onderafdeelingen van den bond’, *Ibid.* 1903-42 (17 October 1903), 334; Barnard, *Van “verstoten kind” tot belijvende kerk*, 153.

93 E.g.: L.H. Slotemaker and B.C.J. Mosselmans, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *De Hervorming* 1879-14 (5 April 1879), 58; Cossee, ‘De doopsgezinden en de opkomst van het modernisme in Nederland’, 237; Cossee, ‘De stichting van de Vrije Gemeente’, 112-113; Barnard, *Van “verstoten kind” tot belijvende kerk*, 147-151.

to substantiate their claim that their church group came closest to the ideal Protestant community of faith. They looked at each other rather suspiciously, trying to bolster their own ranks.

There was not only a competitive 'battle' going on among the different modernist church groups, but also one between these groups and the NPB. Dutch Reformed modernists complained that the NPB had facilitated defections from the Dutch Reformed Church to other denominations. One of them, for example, stated in retrospect in 1914 that battle-weary Reformed church members had only been able to make the switch to the Remonstrant Brotherhood "because the NPB had served as their footbridge."⁹⁴ In Arnhem, Meppel, Hoozeveen, Dordrecht, and Vlaardingen, between 1879 and 1908, local NPB branches had indeed played a role in the founding of new Remonstrant congregations by dissatisfied Reformed modernists.⁹⁵ For a significant number of Dutch Reformed modernists, the NPB had also been the springboard to the Mennonite Society in the Zeeland town of Goes in 1889.⁹⁶ It therefore became subject to increasing criticism. There was also another reason for Dutch Reformed modernists to be displeased with the NPB. More and more NPB branches had taken on church-like characteristics: they had begun to offer religious services and to appoint ministers. Dissatisfaction over this trend also manifested itself in non-Reformed circles. The NPB was accused of depriving denominations of potential new members: by functioning as a 'church', it did not stimulate people who might 'belong', based on their ancestry, to a particular denomination, to actually join that denomination.⁹⁷ Moreover, a sentiment that had been latent within parts of the non-Reformed segment of the modernist movement in the first decades after the founding of the NPB now became more manifest: some Remonstrants, Mennonites, and Lutherans felt that the NPB primarily existed for the benefit of Dutch Reformed modernists. As the Mennonite theologian S. Cramer (1842-1913), using the pen name 'A. van Buijten',⁹⁸ straightforwardly put it in *De Hervorming* in 1903: "we, dissenters [Remonstrants, Mennonites, and Lutherans, TK], do not really need

94 D. Mulder, 'Ingezonden stukken – Nog meer vragen', *De Hervorming* 1914-01 (3 January 1914), 7. Similar accusations are made in: [O. Genouy in:] G.A. Hoevers, 'Berichten en mededeelingen – De Protestantenvond en de Ned. Herv. Kerk', *Ibid.* 1914-25 (20 June 1914), 216; K.A. Beversluis, *Samen bouwen. Korte schets van de ontwikkeling en arbeid der organisatie van Vrijzinnige Hervormden in Nederland* (Huis ter Heide 1930), 8; Niemeijer, *Kerk en kerkgaan* xv, 7.

95 Barnard, *Van "verstoten kind" tot belijdende kerk*, 58, 64, 134, 281.

96 Ph.M. van der Mandere, 'Uit Goes', *De Hervorming* 1889-50 (14 December 1889), 201.

97 Krijger, 'De organisatorische spin in het vrijzinnige web', 53-54.

98 W.J. Kühler, 'Levensbericht van dr. S. Cramer', in: *Handelingen en mededeelingen van de Maatschappij der Nederlandsche Letterkunde te Leiden, over het jaar 1912-1913* 111 (Leiden 1913), 71-101, here 99.

the NPB.” He explained that the *raison d'être* for many NPB branches was not so much to facilitate cross-denominational contacts, as it was to provide shelter to Dutch Reformed modernists who were confronted with severe orthodox hostility in their home congregations, by offering an alternative to local church life. In most instances, non-Reformed modernists were not hindered in the profession of their liberal beliefs and therefore did not have to find such ‘shelter’. Cramer further suggested that *dissenters* had only joined the NPB in the past in order to express their sympathy for modernists in the Dutch Reformed Church, whose position was more precarious than their own. However, now that the latter were openly beginning to doubt their right to exist as separate communities of faith, the former might well lose their motivation to exert themselves for the NPB.⁹⁹

Because of the dissatisfaction with the NPB that intensified within both Reformed and non-Reformed modernist circles, the ideal of the NPB as the community of faith in which all modernists would ultimately unite definitively faded away. The NPB wanted to promote the general interests of the entire modernist community, but now that many of its branches had developed into nondenominational church-like congregations, doubts were raised about whether it could still fulfil this objective. Since they had come to see NPB branches as competitors that hindered their own growth, church groups felt that there was a conflict of interest between the association and themselves. They were no longer willing to just accept the central role of the NPB within the modernist movement.¹⁰⁰ As a result, in the first decades of the twentieth century, *De Hervorming* was full of articles in which the relationship of the NPB vis-à-vis denominational groups of modernists was discussed.

99 A. van Buijten [S. Cramer], ‘De vrijzinnige hervormden en de vrijzinnige dissenters’, *De Hervorming* 1903-08 (21 February 1903), 58-59, here 59. See also: ‘Binnenland – De algemeene vergadering’, *Ibid.* 1889-43 (26 October 1889), 171; S. de Waard, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Protesten’, *Ibid.* 1895-46 (16 November 1895), 183-184, here 184; A. Gerritsma, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Protesten’, *Ibid.* 1895-47 (23 November 1895), 187-188, here 187; J. Herman de Ridder, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Protesten’, *Ibid.* 1895-48 (30 November 1895), 191-192, here 191. Afterwards, such sentiments only increased. See, e.g.: F. Kleyn, ‘Rondom de kerk – De Nederl. Protestantenbond en onze Broederschap’, *Uit de Remonstrantsche Broederschap* XXXVIII (1926/1927), 103-109; F. Kleyn, ‘Rondom de kerk – Nog eens: Onze Broederschap en de Nederlandsche Protestantenbond’, *Ibid.* XXXVIII (1926/1927), 172-179; N. Blokker, ‘Kerkelijk leven – De verhouding van Remonstrantsche Broederschap en Nederl. Protestantenbond’, *Levensrichting* v.4 (April 1940), 8-17.

100 Exemplary in this respect is H.Y. Groenewegen’s remark at the 1914 general meeting of the Remonstrant Brotherhood that “the NPB cannot, and ought not to, put itself on a par with grand, historical institutions of religious community life such as the churches.” Quoted from: [H.Y. Groenewegen in:] ‘Kerknieuws – Remonstrantsche Broederschap’, *Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant* LXXI.146 (27 May 1914), evening paper D, 1.

The aforementioned 'ecclesial turn' not only gave the *coup de grâce* to some modernists' dream that the NPB would come to replace church life; it also entailed a reappréciation of church practices. Fuelled by a general trend in society that replaced individualism and intellectualism with communality and emotions, as well as by the rise of right-wing modernists, criticism of modernist congregational life grew. Modernist services, hymns, and sermons were said to be too intellectualistic, lacking appeal to emotions.¹⁰¹ There was a call for enriching the liturgy with more symbolism and for paying more attention to the 'mysterious' side of faith, a call that did not leave the NPB unaffected. At the request of some of their members, more and more branches decided to offer the option of baptismal services and Lord's Supper ceremonies.¹⁰² Within the Remonstrant Brotherhood, some of whose congregations had abolished one or both of these sacraments in the late nineteenth century, a similar development occurred.¹⁰³ The 'ecclesial turn' was reflected in hymnological developments as well. To the dissatisfaction of a growing number of modernists, the NPB hymnbook, first issued in 1882, was pervaded with a spirit of rationalism, optimism, and triumphalism.¹⁰⁴ The NPB decided to placate these modernists by publishing a new hymnbook in 1920, which contained more psalms, more early-nineteenth-century hymns, and more songs with lyrics that soun-

101 Een trouw kerkbezoeker, 'Ingezonden stukken – Waaraan is de verslappung van het vrijzinnig godsdienstig leven te wijten?', *De Hervorming* 1906-46 (17 November 1906), 365-366, here 365; G.A. Hoevers, 'Over eeredienst', *Ibid.* 1913-03 (18 January 1913), 18-19; Eene getrouwe kerkbezoekster, 'Redactioneel – Het kerkbezoek', *Ibid.* 1914-22 (30 May 1914), 189-190; K.F. Proost, 'Kunst en letteren – Kunst in onze godsdienst-oefeningen', *Ibid.* 1919-11 (15 March 1919), 42; A.C. Schade van Westrum, 'Kerkelijk leven – De symboliek in de protestantsche eeredienst', *Ibid.* 1921-28 (16 July 1921), 222.

102 In 1946, N.A. Bruining could therefore conclude that within the NPB, "everything is done in a more ecclesial style than several decades ago." Quoted from: N.A. Bruining, 'Mej.dr. N.A. Bruining schrijft', *Bondsnieuws* V.10 (2 May 1946), 2.

103 E.J. Kuiper, 'In het krachtenveld van beschaving en godsdienst. De periode van het modernisme (1850-1920)', in: G.J. Hoenderdaal and P.M. Luca (eds.), *Staat in de vrijheid. De geschiedenis van de remonstranten* (Zutphen 1982), 107-142, here 136; Barnard, *Van "verstoten kind" tot belijdende kerk*, 361-368; J. van Zutphen, *Harde grond. Kerkelijke verhoudingen in Groningen, 1813-1945* (Assen 2012), 142.

104 E.g.: H. Bakels, 'Gemeenten die de psalmen hebben afgeschaft', *De Hervorming* 1908-25 (20 June 1908), 194-195; 1908-26 (27 June 1908), 203; 1908-27 (4 July 1908), 212-213; L. Knappert, 'Het psalmboek en de moderneren', *Ibid.* 1908-28 (11 July 1908), 219; F. Dijkema, 'De gemeente en het psalmboek', *Ibid.* 1908-29 (18 July 1908), 227-228; P.F. van Slijpe, 'Ingezonden – Onze godsdienstige liederen', *Ibid.* 1915-24 (12 June 1915), 211; H.A. van Bakel, 'Bondsleven – Vervolgbundel', *Ibid.* 1920-38 (25 September 1920), 150-151. See also: Le Coq, *Wat vlied' of bezwijk'*, 127-131.

ded rather traditional and orthodox than did its predecessor.¹⁰⁵ Thus, as these examples indicate, instead of experimenting with structure, liturgy, language, and symbols, the modernist movement fell back on traditional forms. Eventually, even in the Free Congregation in Amsterdam, which had once prided itself on its reformist spirit, experienced a tempering of its initial 'radicalism'; "the bourgeois optimism, candidly disregarding the classic ecclesial tradition," D. Drijver wrote in *De Hervorming* in 1927, "no longer sets the tone in the Free Congregation. [. . .]. Time has also taught that the old Bible cannot be replaced by the Bible of mankind without doing so at the expense [of congregational life]."¹⁰⁶

The reappréciation of the institution of the church and ecclesial traditions also found expression in modernist architecture. The oldest buildings that were built to house NPB branches, constructed in the 1880s and 1890s, reflected the then dominant conviction in the modernist movement that the exterior of a building should never turn a religious service into a 'sacralised' event; rather, it was only the religious service itself that could create a 'sacred' atmosphere.¹⁰⁷ In 1882, for example, the NPB in Varsseveld had erected a simple place of assembly that was held up in *Nieuw Leven* in 1895 as an example to all branches that wanted to create buildings of their own: in Varsseveld, the NPB "had not wasted thousands of guilders on beautiful buildings, but had instead built an adequate and convenient meeting-place that could be heated during the winter."¹⁰⁸ In the early decades of the twentieth century, however, public opinion changed. It came to be acknowledged that buildings used for religious purposes should be constructed in such a way that they aroused 'devotional' feelings in people.¹⁰⁹ Those erected in the nineteenth century were said to be too 'spiritually poor', as were the services held inside them.¹¹⁰ An attractive, majestic building could not only help to increase the devotion of those who already had religious faith, it might

105 Le Coq, *Wat vlied' of bezwijk'*, 143-151.

106 [A.E.F. Junod], 'Binnenland – Een gouden feest', *De Hervorming* 1927-12 (3 December 1927), 91-92, here 92.

107 Explicitly put forward in: J. Key, 'Offervaardigheid', *Ibid.* 1884-28 (12 July 1884), 111.

108 'Binnenland – IJver met verstand', *Ibid.* 1895-03 (19 January 1895), 10.

109 G.A. Hoevers, 'Over eeredienst', *Ibid.* 1913-03 (18 January 1913), 18-19, here 19; P.B., 'Ingezonden – Vormen?', *Ibid.* 1916-18 (29 April 1916), 150-151; J. Doets Jzn., 'Kerkelijk leven – Bouwen als uiting van innerlijke ervaring', *De Stroom* v.30 (3 July 1926), 2; C.E. Hooykaas, 'In den stroom – Kerkbouw in onze beweging', *Ibid.* v1.2 (18 December 1926), 2.

110 A.C. van Daalen, 'Ingezonden – De bevordering van het kerkgaan', *De Hervorming* 1914-15 (11 April 1914), 130; K.F. Proost, 'Kunst en letteren – Kunst in onze godsdiensttoefeningen', *Ibid.* 1919-10 (8 March 1919), 38.

also invite people who would have otherwise walked past it to take a look inside.¹¹¹ As visual manifestations of the invisible spiritual realm, places of worship should ideally fill people with awe for the divine. Buildings such as the one in Varsseveld, which had once been praised for their simplicity, therefore fell into disfavour. In 1925, the Remonstrant minister R. Miedema (1886-1954) inveighed bitterly against them and blamed an older generation of modernists for underestimating the power artistic imagination could have:

In our circles, the fact has long been neglected that architecture is the form of art that is most important for our religious life, that the place of religious gatherings in itself can have a tremendous influence on the development of a religious community. Many of us still do not realise this. One only has to look at the NPB buildings [...] that have been erected in our country in the nineteenth century. A lack of financial resources when they were built should not serve as an extenuation of the characterlessness of these buildings, of their hideous gymnastics hall-like appearance, of the horrible lack of taste or bad taste that oftentimes characterises them, of their lack of sacredness, and of their lack of a religious atmosphere. Rather, it should be recognised that [NPB buildings] were intended to have no sacred character at all and were meant to be nothing more than meeting-places, or that modernists in those days did not understand that a place of worship should be a work of art in the sense that its exterior should reflect the principles of the faith community that makes use of it.

Miedema admitted that one's personal faith did not depend on external influences, but he did believe that the chronic "lack of solidarity" that he descried in modernist circles was in large part a consequence of the absence of buildings that were expressions of an artistic sense and a community spirit.¹¹² Although his words sounded like an exhortation, in fact Miedema merely voiced what had become mainstream opinion, one that is clearly reflected in the differ-

111 P.B., 'Ingezonden – Vormen?', *De Hervorming* 1916-18 (29 April 1916), 150-151; Fraternitus, 'Kerkelijk leven – Bedehuis of vergaderlokaal', *Ibid.* 1921-30 (30 July 1921), 236-238; L.J. van Holk, 'Kerkelijk leven – Godsdienst als heiligheidsbesef', *Ibid.* 1921-43 (29 October 1921), 341-342; 1921-44 (5 November 1921), 348-350; H.T. de Graaf, 'Kerkelijk leven – Heiligheidsbesef in het broederschapshuis', *Ibid.* 1921-49 (10 December 1921), 388-390.

112 R. Miedema, 'Godsdienst en bouwkunst', *Ibid.* 1925-25 (20 June 1925), 196.

ence between NPB buildings erected before and after 1900: the latter looked like churches, on both the outside and the inside.¹¹³

The 'ecclesial turn' also meant that modernist church groups began to focus more on the strengthening of their own ranks instead of seeking to strength the modernist movement as a whole. In Dutch Reformed circles, this denominational introversion resulted in the founding of the *Evangelische Unie* (Gospel Union) in 1896. The roots of the *Evangelische Unie* can be traced back to an 1896 article, in which B.W. Colenbrander, one of the founding fathers of the NPB, argued that since confessionalists were once again trying to gain absolute power in the Dutch Reformed Church, a commission for the protection of modernist interests was needed.¹¹⁴ While Colenbrander proposed establishing such a commission within the framework of the NPB, the minister J.A. Bruins, Sr. (1845-1915) disagreed that the NPB was the obvious body to combat revitalised confessionalism within the Dutch Reformed Church. As Bruins explained, the NPB was an organisation of modernists, whereas not all non-confessionalists in the Dutch Reformed Church belonged to the modernist movement. Moreover, although counterattacking confessionalism had been its focus in the past, the NPB currently devoted more attention to its activity outside of church life. Therefore, Bruins argued that an entirely new organisation, not embedded within the NPB, had to be founded.¹¹⁵ Colenbrander was convinced by Bruins, and others gave their approval to Bruins's suggestion as well, leading to the provisional establishment of the *Evangelische Unie* on 18 November 1896. According to its articles of association, the *Evangelische Unie*, as constituted on 20 May 1897, was "an organisation of members of the Dutch Reformed Church who want to maintain the Protestant principle of the freedom of individual Christian faith within this denomination" and sought to "defend and expand the ecclesial rights of its members" by, among other things, "taking part in church council elections and arranging meetings to discuss ecclesiastical affairs."¹¹⁶ Claiming to be founded on the Gospel, without specifying how the Gospel should be interpreted, the *Evangelische Unie* hoped to be broad enough to unite modernists, *evangelischen*, and possibly even the moderately orthodox *ethischen*. Among the most dedicated NPB members, such as

113 Others shared Miedema's opinion. See, e.g.: J.J. Meyer, *Kerk en kerkgaan* XVI. *De kerkbouw* (Huis ter Heide 1930), 5-6; J. Ellerbroek, *Kerk en kerkgaan* XVIII. *Kerkbezoek* (Huis ter Heide 1930), 8.

114 B.W. Colenbrander, 'Binnenland – Bescheiden vragen', *De Hervorming* 1896-27 (4 July 1896), 107.

115 J.A. Bruins, Sr., 'Ingezonden stukken', *Ibid.* 1896-28 (11 July 1896), 112. See also: Beversluis, *Een halve eeuw strijd en opbouw*, 41.

116 'Binnenland – De Evangelische Unie', *De Hervorming* 1897-10 (6 March 1897), 39.

J. van Loenen Martinet, there was no sympathy for this initiative: the *Evangelische Unie* was trying to do what the NPB might have done.¹¹⁷ Besides, to meet the wishes of people like Colenbrander and Bruins, a commission exclusively devoted to the promotion of the interests of Dutch Reformed modernists had been founded during the 1896 NPB meeting, just two weeks before the *Evangelische Unie* came into existence. Yet those involved with the latter thought that the founding of such a commission within the NPB was not sufficient.¹¹⁸ As W. Schuurman (1837-1909) and B.D. Eerdmans, board members of the *Evangelische Unie*, further argued, the NPB was still permeated with the sentiment that the Dutch Reformed Church should be dissolved, whereas, on the contrary, everything should be done to keep a broad-based *volkskerk* intact:¹¹⁹ "it will be disastrous for our nation if all non-confessionalist currents are to be removed from [the Dutch Reformed Church]."¹²⁰ Although the *Evangelische Unie* could not prevent hundreds of Reformed modernists from founding a Remonstrant congregation in Dordrecht in 1897, and from resigning their church membership in Beilen in 1903, Colenbrander, writing under the pseudonym 'Cyriacus', suggested that the motivation for its founding still existed: after all, as far as combatting confessionalism was concerned, the NPB "has proven to be superfluous for the smaller church denominations and unable to contribute to reforms in the Dutch Reformed Church."¹²¹

The smaller church denominations to which Colenbrander referred also took initiatives to strengthen their own positions, as a result of their increased self-esteem and the growing uneasiness with tendencies towards 'churchification' within the NPB. In this regard, the contrast between the period before and after the turn of the century was strongest in Remonstrant circles. Prior to 1895, the official policy of the Remonstrant Brotherhood had been to ab-

117 E.g.: [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – De Evangelische Unie', *De Hervorming* 1897-10 (6 March 1897), 39; 1897-12 (20 March 1897), 46-47, here 47; 1897-13 (27 March 1897), 50; 1897-14 (3 April 1897), 55. See also: Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III, 55-56.

118 A fear that, in the eyes of those involved with the *Evangelische Unie*, proved to be true. See: Cyriacus [B.W. Colenbrander], 'Uit de kerkelijke wereld', *De Hervorming* 1902-21 (24 May 1902), 162-163, here 163; C.M. van Driel, 'Eenheid over alle scheidsmuren heen. B.D. Eerdmans (1868-1948) als vrijzinnig-protestants leider in de kerkelijke strijd', *Documentatieblad voor de Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis na 1800* XXIV.55 (December 2001), 49-73, here 53.

119 B.W. Colenbrander expressed himself in similar terms in: Cyriacus [B.W. Colenbrander], 'Uit de kerkelijke wereld', *De Hervorming* 1902-39 (27 September 1902), 308.

120 W. Schuurman and B.D. Eerdmans, 'Binnenland – Van de Evangelische Unie', *Ibid.* 1897-15 (10 April 1897), 59.

121 Cyriacus [B.W. Colenbrander], 'Uit de kerkelijke wereld', *Ibid.* 1902-41 (11 October 1902), 324-325, here 324.

stain from trying to attract new members, in the hope that the Brotherhood might reintegrate into the Dutch Reformed Church. Modernists who belonged to that church and wanted to join its ranks were welcome, but the Brotherhood did not proactively try to expand. In municipalities where it had no congregation, it did not assist its members and even advised these to go over to other church denominations.¹²² However, beginning around 1900, and increasingly after the founding of the Commission for Dispersed Remonstrants in 1907, the Brotherhood came to see as its duty the preservation of scattered members for the Remonstrant community. Therefore, the creation of *kringen* (circles) of dispersed Remonstrants was strongly, albeit not unanimously, promoted, in a way ideally leading to the founding of new congregations. Even in towns in which a non-Remonstrant liberal congregation or NPB branch was located, efforts were made to organise Remonstrants as a separate group.¹²³ In some cases, this meant that existing local forms of liberal Protestant cooperation came under pressure. The growth of the Remonstrant Brotherhood was apparently more important than the advancement of modernist, and hence religious, life in general, opponents of separate Remonstrant group formation indignantly asserted. One of the latter, S.K. Bakker, ironically but sincerely asked H.Y. Groenewegen, the most convinced advocate of Remonstrant expansion, what the distinctiveness of ‘preaching the Gospel in a Remonstrant way’ actually was,¹²⁴ thereby highlighting the “extremely worrying” phenomenon of denominationalism that was manifesting itself throughout the entire modernist movement.¹²⁵

Indeed, the formation of separate ‘circles’ was not limited to the Remonstrant community; Mennonites were just as active in hammering away at denominational loyalty. Unlike Remonstrants, Mennonites, who characterised themselves as having a liberal attitude, but who did not all identify as modernists,¹²⁶ had always been rather keen on preserving their distinctiveness, symbolised by their practice of believer’s baptism. This distinctiveness, however, came to be stressed with still more intensity around 1900. Mennonites were encouraged not to let cooperation with others happen at the expense of their

122 Barnard, *Van “verstoten kind” tot belijdende kerk*, 29, 159.

123 *Ibid.*, 280–296.

124 S.K. Bakker, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *De Hervorming* 1911–05 (4 February 1911), 38.

125 S.K. Bakker, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Een nieuwe Remonstrantsche Gemeente’, *Ibid.* 1911–07 (18 February 1911), 53.

126 N. van der Zijpp, *Geschiedenis der Doopsgezinden in Nederland* (Arnhem 1952), 218; A. Voolstra and P. Visser, ‘Macht van een minderheid. De geschiedenis van de doopsgezinden in Nederland 1530–2000’, in: F. Stark and E.J. Tillema (eds.), *Kracht van een minderheid. Doopsgezinden in Nederland* (Zoetermeer 2011), 19–47, here 39.

own identity. This found expression in the endeavour to create Mennonite circles in places where the Mennonite community was too small to have its own congregation and so needed to attend congregations belonging to other denominations.¹²⁷ Another manifestation of this tendency was the increased activity of the *Vereeniging betreffende de Doopsgezinden in de verstrooiing* (Association for Dispersed Mennonites). This organisation, founded in 1866, tried to involve scattered Mennonites more actively in the Mennonite community as a whole, by publishing a series of tracts starting in 1897.¹²⁸ Just as in other denominations, the unifying role the NPB wanted to play within the modernist movement thus became more and more problematic among Mennonites, since the latter began to focus more strongly on their own interests, which did not necessarily coincide with those of the NPB. In 1903, the Mennonite minister S.D.A. Wartena (1871-1953) explained that it was important for the modernist movement to have a large representation in the Dutch Reformed Church as the nation's largest denomination, and that non-Reformed modernists therefore loyally worked together with their Reformed counterparts within the framework of the NPB. Yet at the same time, there had always been a latent fear among Mennonites that Reformed modernists played first fiddle in the NPB.¹²⁹ The increased zeal with which Reformed modernists tried to strengthen their position, both within and outside of the NPB, fueled this sentiment.

Liberal Lutherans acted in the same way as Remonstrants and Mennonites, albeit for different reasons. Because their orthodox fellow church members had managed to gain more power, and their ranks had been thinned due to lapsed churchgoers, liberal Lutherans felt the need to organise themselves in a more cohesive way, ultimately resulting in the founding of the *Algemeene Vereeniging van Vrijzinnige Lutherschen* (General Association of Liberal Lutherans) in 1913.¹³⁰

127 For example in Assen. See: P. Brood, 'In volle ontplooiing. Assen tussen circa 1807 en 1920', in: H. Gras et al. (eds.), *Geschiedenis van Assen* (Assen 2000), 148-275, here 255.

128 P.B. Westerdijk, *Geschriftjes ten behoeve van de Doopsgezinden in de verstrooiing* xvi. *Het recht van ons bestaan* (s.l. 1902), 16; F.C. Fleischer, *De Doopsgezinden* (Baarn 1909), 35-36.

129 S.D.A. Wartena, 'Ingezonden stukken – Onderafdeelingen van den bond', *De Hervorming* 1903-43 (24 October 1903), 342. See also: S. de Waard, 'Ingezonden stukken – Protesten', *Ibid.* 1895-46 (16 November 1895), 183-184, here 184; G.A. Hoevers, 'Berichten en mededeelingen – De Protestantenbond en de Ned. Herv. Kerk', *Ibid.* 1914-25 (20 June 1914), 216.

130 C.J. de Kruijter, 'Een bewogen tijdvak, 1914-1952', in: K.G. van Manen (ed.), *Lutheranen in de Lage Landen. Geschiedenis van een godsdienstige minderheid (ca. 1520-2004)* (Zoetermeer 2011), 567-649, here 590, 604. Already before 1913, liberal Lutherans had organised themselves separately in several municipalities, including Amsterdam and Rotterdam. See: Th.A. Fafé, 'Van het revolutiejaar tot het begin van de Eerste Wereldoorlog, 1848-1914', in: Van Manen (ed.), *Lutheranen in de Lage Landen*, 481-565, here 528.

In the meantime, it had turned out that the *Evangelische Unie* had not managed to meet the initial expectations of its founders. The moderately orthodox *ethischen* kept themselves apart from it. Moreover, with some notable exceptions, such as the towns of Tiel in Gelderland and Brielle in South Holland, the *Evangelische Unie* had managed to gain a firm footing only in the province of North Holland. This may seem odd at first, since modernists had a relatively strong position in Dutch Reformed church life in that province.¹³¹ The need for NPB branches had therefore never really been felt there. The presence of the *Evangelische Unie* in North Holland had to do with the fact that most of its leaders had a link to this province, such as B.D. Eerdmans, a minister in Midwoud, J.T. Tenthoff (1847–1916), a minister in Hoorn, A.G. Boon (1835–1908), a minister in Enkhuizen, C. Hille Ris Lambers, a minister in Venhuizen, and H.Ph. de Kanter, a liberal politician who lived in Haarlem at the time. These men were probably afraid that the reinforced and well-organised attempts of confessionalists to seize supreme power over the entire Dutch Reformed Church could become a threat to one of the last bulwarks of Dutch Reformed liberalism. This reveals that the *Evangelische Unie* had a defensive character, which was intensified by its heterogeneous composition. Modernists and *evangelischen* were united in their anti-confessionalism, but had different ideas regarding faith- and church-related issues, as a result of which the *Evangelische Unie* did not declare itself in favour of structural reforms of the Dutch Reformed Church. Because the NPB commission for Dutch Reformed modernists had a dilatory attitude, the desire to organise Reformed liberals in a different way surged up.

In a series of articles published in 1902 and 1903 in *De Hervorming*, B.W. Colenbrander tried to create a sense of urgency among his modernist church members to found a “new Reformed society,” by which he meant the establishment of a liberal sub-denomination within the framework of the Dutch Reformed Church.¹³² Some of Colenbrander’s fellow church members argued that the *Evangelische Unie* should be reformed in such a way that it would become more active.¹³³ Others agreed with Colenbrander that another type of organisation was needed.¹³⁴ Yet all *volkskerk*-minded modernists were of the same mind on one point: something had to be done to strengthen liber-

131 As comes to the fore in: E.J. Tillema, *De kop in de wind. Ter gelegenheid van het 110-jarige jubileum van de Vereniging van Vrijzinnige Protestanten in Noord-Holland* (Rotterdam 2014).

132 Cyriacus [B.W. Colenbrander], ‘Uit de kerkelijke wereld’, *De Hervorming* 1903-09 (28 February 1903), 67–68.

133 E.g.: A. Rutgers van der Loeff, ‘Kroniek’, *Teekenen des Tijds* v (1903), 167–178, here 174–178.

134 E.g.: H. de G., ‘Ingezonden stukken – Waarop het aankomt’, *De Hervorming* 1903-16 (18 April 1903), 126.

als' position within the Dutch Reformed Church. In the lead-up to the 1903 NPB meeting, it was obvious that these modernists would no longer acquiesce to the existing situation. The NPB commission for Dutch Reformed modernists tried to take charge by suggesting that Reformed liberals be allowed to organise themselves as a subgroup within the NPB. During the meeting, Eerdmans showed himself to be a firm advocate of this suggestion. Although he was one of the leading men of the *Evangelische Unie*, he admitted that this organisation "has purely a defensive character and tries to bring together people of different persuasions in order to combat confessionalism. We cannot use it for the positive work we have to do."¹³⁵ With 'positive work', Eerdmans meant that Reformed liberals should not only counterattack confessionalism, but also had to build a materially and spiritually flourishing community of their own to be able to preserve and enlarge their influence within the Dutch Reformed Church. In a more militant spirit than Eerdmans, C.J. Niemeijer defended the proposal to enable members of the Dutch Reformed Church to set up a church-based subgroup within the NPB. He warned that if the NPB assembly voted down the proposal, the NPB's own future would be at stake:

This organisation [of Reformed liberals] needs to come into being, it will come into being, [indeed] it comes into being. The only question is: how? We wish to bring it into being within the framework of the NPB [. . .]. For the NPB, it is to be hoped that this will succeed. [. . .] If not, the NPB lays a burden upon itself. A separate organisation will then arise alongside the NPB and will, as can be expected, soon stand in opposition to the NPB. If Reformed modernists have to organise themselves outside of it, they can no longer look at the NPB in the same way as they do now.¹³⁶

However, the assembly's majority agreed with W. Zaalberg, Van Loenen Martinet, Maronier, and Colenbrander that the NPB, as an interdenominational union, should not concern itself with the ecclesial interests of one particular group, and rejected the proposal. Niemeijer did not take this decision lying down. On 8 April 1904, he and four like-minded Dutch Reformed ministers gathered in Leeuwarden to discuss whether it would be possible to "collect money, to provide [modernist] religious education and preaching; in other words, to preserve what would otherwise be lost and to bring power where

¹³⁵ [B.D. Eerdmans in:] *Handelingen NPB 1903*, 51.

¹³⁶ [C.J. Niemeijer in:] *Ibid.*, 50.

weakness leads to decay,"¹³⁷ the result being the founding of the *Vereeniging van Vrijzinnige Hervormden in Friesland*.¹³⁸ In spite of the name 'vrijzinnig' ('liberal'), which, as chapter 3 showed, used to be a term that was broader than 'modernist', this association did not want to include non-modernists. As Niemeijer explained several weeks later, all Dutch Reformed currents needed to separately organise themselves before they could collaborate with each other.¹³⁹ In retrospect, he thus felt that the creation of the *Evangelische Unie* had been premature. Other provincial associations of Reformed liberals, founded in 1904 and subsequent years after the example of the one in Friesland, nonetheless targeted both modernists and *evangelischen*, though they consisted mainly of modernists as well.¹⁴⁰

Although the institutionalisation of the liberal faction within the Dutch Reformed Church was something new, the arguments that supporters of this institutionalisation used to defend their cause were not. Already in the late nineteenth century, *volkskerk*-minded modernists had stated that the modernist movement could not do without a strong representation in the Dutch Reformed Church, as this denomination was the 'gateway to the masses'. As the largest Protestant denomination in the Netherlands ever since the Reformation, the Dutch Reformed Church not only had congregations in most Dutch municipalities – with the exception of rural villages in the predominantly Catholic provinces of Brabant and Limburg –, it also had a massive following among Dutchmen from all walks of life,¹⁴¹ and exerted more influence on Dutch society and culture at large than any other Protestant community of faith.¹⁴² For that reason, a numerous, powerful modernist presence

137 'Berichten, enz. – Kerkelijke actie van moderneren in Friesland', *De Hervorming* 1904-13 (26 March 1904), 100-101, here 101.

138 Beversluis, *Een halve eeuw strijd en opbouw*, 47-48.

139 C.J. Niemeijer, 'Kroniek', *Teekenen des Tijds* VI (1904), 223-239, here 235-236; [C.J. Niemeijer in:] 'Berichten, enz. – Evangelischen en moderneren', *De Hervorming* 1904-27 (2 July 1904), 212-213, here 213.

140 C. Hille Ris Lambers, 'Ingezonden stukken – Overdreven bezwaren', *Ibid.* 1909-50 (11 December 1909), 398-399, here 398; Van Driel, *Dienaar van twee heren*, 260.

141 E.g.: 'Binnenland – Een adres aan de synode', *De Hervorming* 1896-03 (18 January 1896), 11; [W. Schuurman and B.D. Eerdmans in:] 'Binnenland – Dordrecht', *Ibid.* 1897-41 (9 October 1897), 162-163; W.C. van Manen, 'Een tegenprotest', *Ibid.* 1897-45 (6 November 1897), 178; W.C. van Manen, 'Het fatale fragment', *Ibid.* 1897-46 (13 November 1897), 182.

142 E.g.: B.W. Colenbrander, 'De drang des tijds', *Ibid.* 1896-28 (11 July 1896), 109-110, here 109; H. Oort, 'Terug naar het heidendom', *Ibid.* 1897-06 (6 February 1897), 21; Cyriacus [B.W. Colenbrander], 'Uit de kerkelijke wereld', *Ibid.* 1903-37 (12 September 1903), 291-292, here 292; B.W. Colenbrander, *De Vereeniging der Vrijzinnig-Nederlandsch-Hervormden* (Schiedam 1905), 5.

in the Dutch Reformed Church was in the interest of Remonstrant, Mennonite, Lutheran, and non-churchgoing modernists as well.¹⁴³ Moreover, as some had argued from the 1860s onwards, modernists had the historical and moral right to be in the Reformed Church. Historical, because the modernist movement had not been 'transplanted' into this denomination, but had emerged within it; moral, because modernists were the true defenders of the Protestant principle of freedom of conscience.¹⁴⁴ Besides, even though confessionalists frequently filled modernists with despair, the multiform character of the Reformed Church was beneficial to both liberals and orthodoxy.¹⁴⁵ Modernist champions of the ideal of the *volkskerk* did not say that the various movements should be present in the same congregations – their differences were too fundamental for that –, but they did believe that it was best for these movements to stay together in the same denomination. The coexistence of several currents within the Reformed Church gave orthodoxy and liberals the opportunity to learn from each other; it forced them to continuously reflect on their own ideas and would, as a consequence, ultimately foster mutual appreciation.¹⁴⁶ *Volkskerk*-minded modernists felt that there was no urgency to go away. The practice in orthodox-dominated congregations might be different, but so far, the Dutch Reformed synod had never explicitly condemned liberal

143 E.g.: B.D. Eerdmans, 'Over vrijzinnig-hervormden', *De Hervorming* 1905-20 (20 May 1905), 154-155, here 155; G. Nijhoff, 'Ingezonden stukken', *Ibid.* 1906-20 (19 May 1906), 158-159, here 159; Niemeijer, *Kerk en kerkgaan* xv, 8-9. Some non-Reformed liberals acknowledged this as well. See, e.g.: A. van Buijten [S. Cramer], 'De vrijzinnige hervormden en de vrijzinnige dissenters', *De Hervorming* 1903-06 (7 February 1903), 42-43; 1903-07 (14 February 1903), 51-52.

144 E.g.: B.W. Colenbrander, 'Uitgaan of uiteengaan?', *Ibid.* 1897-01 (2 January 1897), 2; Cyriacus [B.W. Colenbrander], 'Uit de kerkelijke wereld', *Ibid.* 1903-09 (28 February 1903), 67-68, here 68; N.J. Telders, 'De confessieschroef', *Ibid.* 1907-32 (10 August 1907), 252; Eerdmans, *Het recht der vrijzinnigen*, 12-17; B.D. Eerdmans, 'Pro', in: B.D. Eerdmans and J. Slotemaker de Bruïne, *Het recht der vrijzinnigen in de N.H. Kerk* (Baarn 1907), 1-18, here 3-15; C.J. Niemeijer, *Ons recht en onze plicht in de Ned. Hervormde Kerk* (Bolsward [1913]), 5-11.

145 E.g.: [L. van Cleeff in:] 'Binnenland – Vergadering van moderne predikanten uit de noordelijke provinciën te Leeuwarden, 20 Juni', *De Hervorming* 1884-30 (26 July 1884), 120; [J. Knappert in:] 'De 15^e algemeene vergadering', *Ibid.* 1885-46 (14 November 1885), 181-182, here 181; J. Knappert, 'Ingezonden stukken', *Ibid.* 1887-03 (15 January 1887), 11; L. Knappert, 'Roeping', *Ibid.* 1903-23 (6 June 1903), 177-178, here 178; A. Priester, 'Kerkelijk leven – Blijven in de Herv. Kerk', *Ibid.* 1923-16 (21 April 1923), 124-126, here 126; Niemeijer, *Kerk en kerkgaan* xv, 6.

146 As A.C. Schade van Westrum wrote in 1921, this argument was "oftentimes and preferably used to defend and justify the existence and continued coexistence of diverse currents within the same denomination." Quoted from: A.C. Schade van Westrum, 'Kerkelijk leven – De verschillende richtingen in de kerk', *De Hervorming* 1921-21 (28 May 1921), 163-165, here 164.

teachings, and had allowed modernist ministers to preach those teachings.¹⁴⁷ Lastly, in spite of its initial ambition to become the organisational home of all religious liberals, the NPB had never replaced the existing churches and had therefore to reckon with members belonging to different denominations. Because of this, and because of the anti-ecclesial stance that had been quite manifest among its leading men, the NPB was not the obvious organisation to uphold the interests of a particular group of churchgoing modernists. In addition, as noted above, there was a feeling in Dutch Reformed circles that the NPB facilitated Reformed liberals joining the Remonstrant Brotherhood in particular.¹⁴⁸ In NPB circles, it was argued that NPB branches had in fact prevented modernists who were dissatisfied with the Reformed Church from becoming apostates and had stimulated children of Dutch Reformed parents not to renounce their family's church background.¹⁴⁹ Nevertheless, what mattered was not the thriving of church life as such, but the dissemination of modernist principles. People like Van Loenen Martinet thought that being a modernist ought to prevail over being a member of a particular denomination.

The provincial associations of Reformed liberals were joined by individuals, by parts of or even entire Reformed congregations, and in some cases even by local NPB branches.¹⁵⁰ Moreover, in many places, municipal branches came into existence under their auspices. Their rapid growth confronted these provincial associations with two questions: the extent to which it was necessary to tighten their interrelationships in order to coordinate their activities, and the nature of their relationship to the *Evangelische Unie*. To satisfactorily solve both issues, a joint meeting of the *Evangelische Unie* and representatives of the provincial associations of Reformed liberals was held in 1906. There, it was decided to install a Central Committee, federatively encompassing all provincial associations, and to dissolve the Evangelical Union,¹⁵¹ which, in spite of Niemeijer's words that it could continue to exist,¹⁵² had basically become

147 E.g.: B.D. Eerdman, 'Ingezonden stukken', *De Hervorming* 1897-46 (13 November 1897), 184; Eerdman, *Het recht der vrijzinnigen*, 9-12; L. Knappert, 'Roeping', *De Hervorming* 1903-23 (6 June 1903), 177-178, here 178.

148 E.g.: [C.J. Niemeijer in:] *Handelingen NPB* 1909, 41-51, here 47; Niemeijer, *Kerk en kerkgaan* xv, 7.

149 E.g.: I. van den Bergh, 'Protestantenbond en kerk', *De Hervorming* 1910-30 (23 July 1910), 235.

150 In Friesland and Gelderland, for example, several NPB branches joined the provincial association of Reformed liberals.

151 Beversluis, *Een halve eeuw strijd en opbouw*, 55-56. The dissolution of the *Evangelische Unie* was effectuated on 18 January 1907.

152 [C.J. Niemeijer in:] 'Berichten, enz. – De Vereeniging van Vrijzinnige Hervormden in Friesland', *De Hervorming* 1904-14 (2 April 1904), 108.

redundant. Because the intensified factional struggle in the Dutch Reformed Church called for well-structured and larger-scale action, the Central Committee was replaced by the centralised *Vereeniging van Vrijzinnige Hervormden in Nederland*, endowed with decisive authority, in 1913.

Because most local branches of Reformed liberals began to offer religious services and religious education of their own, they poached on the territory of NPB branches. The relationship between (what would become) the vvH and the NPB remained rather ambiguous and even outright antagonistic on occasion. A clear illustration thereof is the controversy between Van Loenen Martinet and Niemeijer. The former had always been quite vocal about his dislike of denominational life and his dissatisfaction with the 'ecclesial turn'. He was therefore not very pleased with the attempts of some Reformed liberals to organise themselves in separate church-based associations and suggested in 1908 that these attempts would never be able to reform the Dutch Reformed Church in such a way that it would please liberals, as "the modernist faction in the Dutch Reformed Church is, as a party of action, dead and buried."¹⁵³ This remark provoked Niemeijer to heap reproaches upon Van Loenen Martinet:

That you are no friend of the Dutch Reformed Church, that you do not have an eye for the great interests which are at stake in the endeavour to maintain and strengthen the position of liberals in this denomination, that, partly as a consequence thereof, your magazine is a false reflection of what is being thought, felt, considered, and done in liberal circles – I have noticed all this, much to my regret, already several times and now notice it again.¹⁵⁴

Although both men would clash several times later,¹⁵⁵ and Van Loenen Martinet continued to look at the church as a superseded institution,¹⁵⁶ he did come to appreciate the vvH as a sign of renewed modernist vigour in the Dutch Reformed Church. For their part, such leaders of the vvH as Niemeijer

¹⁵³ [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Berichten, enz. – De vrijzinnige hervormde predikanten', *De Hervorming* 1908-18 (2 May 1908), 141.

¹⁵⁴ [C.J. Niemeijer in:] 'Berichten, enz. – De vergadering van vrijzinnigen', *Ibid.* 1908-19 (9 May 1908), 148.

¹⁵⁵ E.g.: [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Berichten, enz. – Een nabetrachting', *Ibid.* 1908-50 (12 December 1908), 395-396; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Berichten, enz. – Bogerman in den Protestantenvond', *Ibid.* 1909-48 (27 November 1909), 379; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Berichten, enz. – Een misverstand', *Ibid.* 1909-50 (11 December 1909), 395.

¹⁵⁶ As he made clear in: [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Kroniek', *Nieuw Theologisch Tijdschrift* v (1916), 93-104, here 103. Also in 1916, Meyboom indicated to be of the same mind. See: H.U. Meyboom, *De toekomst onzer kerken* (Buitenpost [1916]), 10-11.

and Eerdmans were not against the NPB – on the contrary, both of them continued to actively participate in it –, but contended that it should abstain from involvement with church life. They reasoned that the NPB had resolutely positioned itself outside of the ecclesial domain in 1903 and could therefore no longer sincerely claim to be contributing to the advancement of free religion within the churches. As Niemeijer suggested, the NPB had three tasks to fulfil. First, it had the symbolic role of embodying the spiritual unity of the modernist movement.¹⁵⁷ Second, it should concentrate on the development of modernism outside of the churches.¹⁵⁸ Third, it could still devote itself to activities for the benefit of the modernist movement at large.¹⁵⁹ This intermediate role could, however, only be a limited one. Because the various denominational groups of modernists were engaged in a competitive struggle with each other and with the NPB, they were no longer willing to just accept a central position of the latter within the modernist movement.¹⁶⁰ What is more, the NPB had more and more turned into a denomination-like bond of church-like congregations, into “a church next to the churches.”¹⁶¹ When in 1923 Roessingh, in a lecture titled *‘Eenheid en organisatie van het Vrijzinnig Protestantisme’* (‘Unity and Organisation of Liberal Protestantism’), sharply criticised the modernist movement for being institutionally divided, for lacking common goals, and for not being heard in Dutch society, the NPB had to face reality.¹⁶² Although the

157 [C.J. Niemeijer in:] ‘Een verzinsel’, *De Hervorming* 1910-43 (22 October 1910), 337-338, here 338.

158 [C.J. Niemeijer in:] ‘Berichten, enz. – De algemeene vergadering’, *Ibid.* 1909-45 (6 November 1909), 356-357, here 356.

159 C.J. Niemeijer et al., ‘Nederlandsche Protestantenbond – Manifest’, *Ibid.* 1910-45 (5 November 1910), 353-354; C.J. Niemeijer, ‘Verblijdt u! Toespraak van dr. C.J. Niemeijer in de openbare godsdienstoefening te Alkmaar 28 October 1913’, *Ibid.* 1913-44 (1 November 1913), 345-347, here 347.

160 E.g.: G. Hulsman, ‘Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Parturiunt montes, et. . .?’, *Ibid.* 1923-27 (7 July 1923), 210-212, here 212. See also: S.H.N. Gorter, ‘In den stroom – Kerkvorming’, *De Stroom* 11.4 (6 January 1923), 2; S.H.N. Gorter, ‘Onze tribune – Kerkvorming’, *Ibid.* 11.5 (13 January 1923), 2; 11.6 (20 January 1923), 2-3; 11.7 (27 January 1923), 2-3; 11.8 (3 February 1923), 2-3; 11.9 (10 February 1923), 2-3; ‘Kerknieuws – De Remonstrantsche Broederschap als vrijzinnige centrale’, *Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant* LXXXIV.34 (4 February 1927), morning paper B, 2.

161 Krijger, ‘De organisatorische spin in het vrijzinnige web’, 53. See also: J.J. Meyer, ‘In den stroom – Na de jaarvergadering van den Protestantenbond’, *De Stroom* IV.48 (7 November 1925), 2-3, here 3.

162 C.E. Hooykaas agreed with Roessingh that modernists had to tighten their bonds, for the following reasons: the ongoing factional quarrels in the Dutch Reformed Church, Roman Catholics’ ostentatious display of power, the socially disruptive consequences of the First World War, the threat of a new war, and the need to exert a stronger influence on cultural life. See: C.E. Hooykaas, *Drieërlei uitzicht. Gedachten inzake de federatie der vrijzinnige godsdienstigen* (Rotterdam [1923]), 14.

NPB had been founded in 1870 to tackle the exact same points of criticism that Roessingh put forward, a new organisation was now created to do that: the *Centrale Commissie voor het Vrijzinnig-Protestantisme*, in which the NPB, the vvH, the Remonstrant Brotherhood, the modernist majority of Mennonites, the General Association of Liberal Lutherans, the Free Congregation in Amsterdam, and several other modernist organisations were represented.¹⁶³ The founding of the CC compelled the NPB to definitively give up its pretention to be the pivot of the modernist movement, and put it in its place – that is, a place *next* to the churches instead of above them.¹⁶⁴

5 The Modernist Movement and Church Reforms: An Evaluation

As a consequence of the then dominant opinion in modernist circles that church life had to be reformed, two attempts were made in the 1870s to shape the faith community of tomorrow.¹⁶⁵ The first attempt was the founding of the NPB in 1870. Created to counteract confessionality and to bring modernists with different denominational backgrounds together, some of its founding fathers and sympathisers hoped that it would come to replace conventional church life. Yet, its ambiguous character made this impossible: the NPB wanted to enhance the free development of religious life both within and outside the churches. It was an ideal shelter for modernists who were chased out of their congregations by uncompromising orthodox church councils, but who did not want to break with church life altogether. As a result, many local branches soon began to offer religious services, to provide religious education and, in due course, even to build chapels and appoint pastors. The experimental potential of the NPB was accordingly nipped in the bud, causing Rauwenhoff to wonder, already in 1883, to what extent an NPB branch was any different from an actual church congregation.¹⁶⁶

A second, more radical attempt to bring the religious community of the age to come into being was the founding of the Free Congregation in Amsterdam

163 M.A. Beek, 'Vijftig jaren Centrale Commissie', *Theologie en Praktijk* xxxiv.1/2 (1974), 59-72; Heering, 'Het vrijzinnig protestantisme op de drempel van een nieuwe tijd', 133-136.

164 H.T. de Graaf, *Kerk en kerkgaan* xx. *Onderlinge verhouding en samenwerking* (Huis ter Heide 1930), 5; Krijger, 'De Protestantenvond als kerk der toekomst', 28-33.

165 In a 1916 brochure, Meyboom mentioned the Free Congregation and the NPB as exceptions to Protestant ecclesiology, which was identical to Roman Catholic ecclesiology in the sense that it considered the institution of the church to embody the Kingdom of God. He nonetheless depicted the NPB as a church denomination, not as a religious association. See: Meyboom, *De toekomst onzer kerken*, 12-13.

166 A.A.H. Hoytink, *100 jaar N.P.B.: 1870-1970* (s.l. [1970]), 16.

in 1877 by a number of discontented Dutch Reformed modernists. The Free Congregation abolished baptism and the Lord's Supper, did not have a deaconry, was structured like any other voluntary association, did not celebrate several Christian festivals and propagated the study of religions other than Christianity. Its founding was, however, not imitated elsewhere in the Netherlands. Dissatisfied Dutch Reformed modernists who were willing to leave their church instead joined other denominations, particularly the Remonstrant Brotherhood. Moreover, there were serious doubts as to whether the Free Congregation was indeed as different from church life as it tried to be. As S. Cramer wrote in 1880:

The more I read and think about it, the more surprised I become that – although I felt a good deal of sympathy for its founding – the Free Congregation (or a Remonstrant congregation) can claim to be something fundamentally different than any regular Reformed, Lutheran, or Mennonite congregation. That it does not involve itself with poor relief does not change a thing about [its] religious fundamentals. That it has substituted infant baptism with some kind of public welcome on behalf of the congregation [. . .] – this is something that, just as baptism as such or prayers, one can only see in a group of devout co-religionists and something one would rather expect to see in a religious meeting of pietists or Darbyites than in an association that has seceded from the church because this church, to quote Hugenholtz, ‘tries to bring together consecrated souls’.¹⁶⁷

The Free Congregation, Cramer implied, had only slightly modified traditional church rituals and fulfilled the exact same functions as any random church congregation.

Regarding institutional reforms within existing church denominations, modernists were in a position to bring about structural changes in the 1870s and early 1880s. In the Remonstrant Brotherhood, confirmed modernists, led by C.P. Tiele, managed to replace the rather traditionally formulated 1861 statement of principles with a new one in 1879. This revision meant that the Remonstrant Brotherhood, which already had a modernist-oriented majority, firmly and decisively opted for modernism.¹⁶⁸ It also caused some moderately orthodox ministers, whose theological convictions closely resembled

167 S. Cramer, ‘Wat in maart gebeuren zal’, *De Hervorming* 1880-11 (13 March 1880), 41-42, here 42.

168 T.R. Barnard, ‘Remonstrantie: banier of steen des aanstoots’, in: K.J. Holtzapffel and Th.M. van Leeuwen (eds.), *De Remonstrantie 400 jaar. Ontstaan, historie, actualiteit* (Zoetermeer

those of Dutch Reformed *evangelischen*, to resign or to no longer meet with their colleagues, and led to the ultimate extinction of moderate orthodoxy within the Brotherhood. When, in 1906, G. van der Pot (1842-1906) died as the last moderately orthodox Remonstrant minister and the board of the Remonstrant congregation in Waddinxveen subsequently asked permission to appoint a moderately-orthodox Dutch Reformed minister as his successor, this was denied: the national governing body of the Brotherhood proclaimed that only Remonstrant ministers, who were all modernists at the time, were eligible to succeed Van der Pot.¹⁶⁹ The process of turning the entire Brotherhood into an all-modernist denomination was thereby complete.

In contrast to their Remonstrant counterparts, Dutch Reformed modernists refrained from trying to seize the momentum. In the 1870s and early 1880s, they were still fairly well represented on the church council level and sometimes even had a majority in the synod. This was, for example, the case in 1883. That year, the synod dealt with a formula that candidate ministers had to endorse to be ordained. Modernists, who were generally unhappy with the existing formula, could have forced a change, but one of them, the then president of the synod J.J.L. Luti (1831-1901), voted along with his confessionalist colleagues, and another modernist, A.A. Land (1850-1910), did not cast a vote at all. The year before, when the synod had approved a modernist-friendly proposal to give congregations the right to split up, president Luti had already ruined modernists' chances of success with his decision that provincial church councils had to endorse the synodal decision by a two-thirds majority instead of a simple majority. F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr. reacted with great irritation in *De Hervorming*; due to Land and Luti, a major opportunity to reform the Dutch Reformed Church in a modernist way had been thrown away.¹⁷⁰ Land explained that he had refrained from voting in deference to an orthodox colleague, who had been ill and had consequently not been able to take part in the voting.¹⁷¹ Luti thought it unethical to issue fundamental reforms by making use of a

2010), 92-105, here 94-96. A strong incentive for the Remonstrant Brotherhood to turn into a modernist denomination was the desire to attract individuals from the highest strata of society. See: E.H. Cossee, Th.M. van Leeuwen and M.A. Bosman-Huizinga, *De remonstranten* (Kampen 2000), 41.

169 T.R. Barnard, 'Hoe het is, hoe het was en hoe het zo geworden is. De Remonstrantse Gemeente Rotterdam van 1850-2000', in: T.R. Barnard and E.H. Cossee (eds.), *Arminianen in de Maasstad. 375 jaar Remonstrantse Gemeente Rotterdam* (Amsterdam 2007), 63-113, here 72.

170 [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'Binnenland – De jongste besluiten der Ned. Herv. synode', *De Hervorming* 1883-37 (15 September 1883), 146; F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr., 'Binnenland – De kerkelijke kwestie', *Ibid.* 1883-43 (27 October 1883), 169-170.

171 A.A. Land, 'Ingezonden stukken – Rectificatie', *Ibid.* 1883-41 (13 October 1883), 164.

temporary modernist majority in the synod, when the majority in the Dutch Reformed Church did not belong to the modernist movement.¹⁷²

Of all the modernist plans for reform that were rejected, the failed attempt to split congregations up or divide them into subparishes caused the most regret. By allowing minorities in congregations to become autonomous or semi-independent, advocates of this idea argued, all currents could develop without hindering each other. There was, however, one flaw in their argument. Any subdivision or split would be based on the situation as it existed at that moment. Fluid boundaries between currents would become sharp demarcation lines. 'Border traffic' would be severely hampered. Could religious life really develop freely in such a static church landscape? Would there still be space for new currents to come into being? These were questions upon which modernist opinion makers did not really reflect. And if the autonomy of all factions was the issue at stake here, would it not be better to split up not only local congregations, but also the entire Dutch Reformed Church? Why should the Dutch Reformed Church as a denomination be preserved? The answer is really a financial one: factional autonomy, in fact, was not the *only* issue at stake. The determination to stay in the Dutch Reformed Church was also a money issue for modernists in the 1870s and 1880s. If modernists departed voluntarily, they would give up all their claims to church property, such as buildings and diacanal funds.¹⁷³ A majority of Dutch Reformed modernists apparently felt that this church denomination should therefore continue to exist, albeit as a mere administrative body.

In the 1870s and 1880s, an anti-ecclesial spirit was dominant in the NPB and *De Hervorming*. This is not to say that every modernist rejected ecclesial structures and rituals, but the opinion that the institution of the church was a relic of supernaturalism, hindering a free development of religious life, clearly prevailed among then modernist opinion leaders. The hope that existing church life, particularly the Dutch Reformed Church, would disintegrate into autonomous congregations and that the NPB would foreshadow organised religious life of the future, in which all modernists would be united, was ventilated loudly in *De Hervorming*; few dissenting opinions were set against it. However, in the late 1880s, this gradually began to change. Kuypersians' attempt to tear the Dutch Reformed Church apart in 1886 and subsequent years, during the so-called '*Doleantie*', prompted those modernists who did not hope for a

172 J.J.L. Luti, 'Ingezonden stukken – Het besluit der synode omtrent art. 27', *De Hervorming* 1883-42 (20 October 1883), 167-168, here 168.

173 B.W. Colenbrander later admitted that this was one of the reasons for modernists to stay in the Dutch Reformed Church. See: Colenbrander, *De Vereeniging der Vrijzinnig-Nederlandsch-Hervormden*, 11.

disintegration of the existing church life to make themselves heard more than they had been. Dissatisfaction now became manifest with the anti-ecclesial spirit in which F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr. and his successor J. van Loenen Martinet had so far edited *De Hervorming*: both had championed a division of the Dutch Reformed Church along factional lines, and the *Doleantie* seemed the catalyst for such a division. Van Loenen Martinet accordingly regarded the *Doleantie*, revolving as it did around Kuyperians' claim to church property, as a legitimate cause and as the ultimate proof that a coexistence of orthodox and liberal Protestants within the same church denomination was to the detriment of both groups. Because he was the editor-in-chief of *De Hervorming*, the magazine of the NPB, it might seem as if his sympathy for the *Doleantie* was representative of the modernist movement as a whole. However, protests by modernists who did not see the *Doleantie* as a legitimate cause at all, led the NPB, as explained in chapter 2, to stress in the subtitle of *De Hervorming* that Van Loenen Martinet's opinions were not official NPB statements in any way.

Modernist voices defending the Dutch Reformed Church not only began to swell because of discontent with Van Loenen Martinet's rather sympathetic editorials on the *Doleantie*, but also because the *Doleantie* was a threat to the ideal of the Dutch Reformed Church as a *volkskerk*, a spiritual home for all Dutchmen and Dutchwomen, regardless of their specific conception of God and their position in society. This ideal was already latent in liberal Reformed circles prior to the *Doleantie*, but actively upholding it had now become an absolute necessity: after all, Kuyper and his supporters explicitly said that they aspired to the destruction of the Dutch Reformed Church as *volkskerk*.¹⁷⁴ The ideal of the *volkskerk* came to be upheld in liberal Reformed circles with even more intensity in the twentieth century. This was, on the one hand, due to the revival of factional quarrels in the Dutch Reformed Church: having recovered from the turmoil that the *Doleantie* had caused in its midst, orthodoxy again took up its endeavour of 'healing' the Dutch Reformed Church by keeping modernism in check.¹⁷⁵ It was, on the other

174 P.A. van Leeuwen, *Het kerkbegrip in de theologie van Abraham Kuyper* (Franeker 1946), 114–115.

175 As said before, J. van Loenen Martinet had predicted that this would happen. The founders of the *Evangelische Unie*, such as the *evangelische* Reformed minister N. Kamp (1843–1911), implicitly admitted that he was right: "Even though the Reformed Churches have emerged next to the Dutch Reformed Church, we should not believe that the spirit of formalism has now disappeared in the latter. [...] So much illusion and untruthfulness! So much form over essence! So much literalism over the vivifying [liberal] spirit!" Quoted from: N. Kamp, *Het formalisme in de Christelijke Kerk van vroegere eeuwen en onzen tijd. Rede, gehouden te Utrecht op de vergadering der Evangelische Unie, den 15 November 1900* (Tiel [1900]), 7.

hand, due to a growing feeling of marginalisation in the modernist movement at large, with which subsequent chapters deal in more detail. In reaction to this perceived marginalisation, it came to be emphasised in liberal Reformed circles that the Dutch Reformed Church was modernists' gateway to the masses and that it was this church denomination that offered modernists the opportunity to directly encounter – and hence influence – Protestant orthodoxy.¹⁷⁶

Modernist voices proclaiming that the institution of the church had had its day not only died down as a result of the rise of *volkskerk*-mindedness, but also as a result of evaporating hope. Those who championed the ideal of the free congregation as an 'experimental garden' in which alternatives to church life could be developed, came to acknowledge that their hope of a realisation of this ideal had been in vain. The Free Congregation in Amsterdam continued to be the only one of its kind, and truly satisfactory new forms of worship that could replace existing ecclesial ones had still not been found. Recognising that it was not realistic to expect that this would change any time soon, modernists such as F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr., H.U. Meyboom, and even J. van Loenen Martinet reconciled themselves to the existing configuration of church life. In early twentieth-century liberal Reformed circles, the anti-ecclesial spirit with which they and others had imbued the modernist movement from the 1860s until the 1890s was looked upon with regret and even resentment. It was said to have weakened modernists' drive to defend their rights in the Dutch Reformed Church.¹⁷⁷ In addition, the NPB was accused of facilitating the crossover of Reformed liberals to other church denominations, particularly the Remonstrant Brotherhood, thereby reducing the number of modernists in the Dutch Reformed Church. The counter-objection that the NPB, by organising religious services, had actually preserved modernists for the Dutch Reformed Church who would have otherwise resigned their church membership altogether, could not alter this sentiment.¹⁷⁸

Ecclesial self-awareness, a sense of being different from liberal Protestant groups in other church denominations, increased among Lutherans, Mennon-

176 Hence, the ideal of the *volkskerk* came to be accentuated instead of abandoned as a result of a perceived marginalisation of liberal Protestants in church and society. As shown in chapter 9, this perception was in large part triggered by the effects of the process of pillarisation (referred to in the introductory chapter). Cf.: Molendijk, 'De vervluchtiging van het vrijzinnig protestantisme', 129-130.

177 E.g.: Beversluis, *Samen bouwen*, 9.

178 E.g.: W. Zaalberg, 'Herinneringen en wenschen', *De Hervorming* 1895-45 (9 November 1898), 177-178; H. Oort and W.H. Stenfert Kroese, 'Nederlandsche Protestantenbond – Hoofdbestuur', *Ibid.* 1896-29 (18 July), 114.

ites, and Remonstrants as well.¹⁷⁹ Regarding the latter in particular, this had to do with the influx of modernists from the Dutch Reformed Church into their ranks, which strengthened a positive self-image.¹⁸⁰ It was moreover a reaction to the growing intensity with which the ideal of the *volkskerk* was put forward in liberal Reformed circles.¹⁸¹ Non-Reformed modernists rejected the notion, implied in the ideal of the *volkskerk*, that it was in the interest of the modernist movement as such to join the Dutch Reformed Church. They were appalled by the insinuation that they lured away modernists from the Dutch Reformed Church by 'proselytising' through the NPB. In fact, they rather felt that Reformed liberals had always played first fiddle in the NPB and claimed that they had primarily joined the NPB in solidarity with 'oppressed' modernists in the Dutch Reformed Church, not because the association had much to offer themselves. When Reformed liberals urged the NPB to concern itself more directly with the enhancement of their position in the Dutch Reformed Church, it was therefore decided at the 1903 general NPB assembly not to comply with their request: focusing on Reformed liberals' interests might intensify the feeling among other modernists that they indeed played second fiddle in the NPB and might even alienate those others from the NPB, threatening the modernist movement with disintegration. As a result, while continuing to participate in the NPB in order to keep in touch with modernists from other church denominations, Reformed liberals founded an association of their own, the VVH, parallel to the NPB. Because the VVH not only took part in church council elections, but also challenged the NPB on its own ground by organising religious services and religious education, the relationship between the two associations was somewhat strained.¹⁸²

In both Reformed and non-Reformed modernist circles, the rise of malcontentism, which was more church-centred than old-school modernism, was a

179 Mennonite modernists had always been keener to accentuate the features that distinguished them from other modernists, but the emphasis on their Mennonite identity intensified at the beginning of the twentieth century. See: A.F. de Jong, 'Zoektocht naar de doperse identiteit', *Doopsgezinde Bijdragen. Nieuwe reeks* XXXVIII (2012), 17-60, here 17. Zwanepol notes that a sense of 'otherness' increased in early twentieth-century Lutheran circles as well. See: K. Zwanepol, *De Evangelisch-Lutherse Kerk* (Kampen 2002), 28.

180 Exemplary in this respect is the Remonstrant minister N. Blokker's remark that the Remonstrant Brotherhood was "more needed than ever" from the late nineteenth century onwards, to provide a place of refuge to Reformed liberals. See: N. Blokker, *Kerk en kerkgaan x. De Remonstranten* (Huis ter Heide 1930), 4-5.

181 [L. Knappert in:] 'Kerknieuws – Moderne theologen', *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* LXXXIII.103 (14 April 1926), evening paper B, 1-2, here 2; Knappert, 'De historische verklaring der gehechtheid aan eigen kerkgenootschap', 191.

182 Beversluis, *Een halve eeuw strijd en opbouw*, 62-65.

further factor contributing to the 'ecclesial turn' in the modernist movement in the late 1890s and early twentieth century. This 'ecclesial turn' affected the position of the NPB within the modernist movement: ecclesial groups of modernists became keener on strengthening their own ranks than on sacrificing their chances of doing so for the benefit of the NPB. The position of the NPB was further weakened due to the circumstance that, as mentioned, many of its branches had developed into church-like congregations and even adopted church rituals: in the twentieth century, a growing number of branches began to organise baptismal services, celebrations of the Lord's Supper and ceremonies resembling the confirmation of new members in church denominations. The NPB had in large part become a league of nondenominational congregations, with the result that it increasingly came to be seen as a competitor to, rather than the mainstay of, groups of modernists in denominational life.¹⁸³ In consequence, the willingness within those groups to continue to allow the NPB a central position in the modernist movement diminished. Once the aforementioned feeling of marginalisation persuaded modernists of the necessity of strengthening their internal cohesion in order to counteract Roman Catholics' and orthodox Protestants' dominance in society, the NPB was superseded – instead, a new organisation, the CC, was founded in which the NPB had a position comparable to that of denominational modernist groups.¹⁸⁴

183 J.A. de Koning et al., *Doel en werk van den Nederlandschen Protestantenvond* ([Nijmegen 1938]), 8; Krijger, 'De Protestantenvond als kerk der toekomst', 18–22.

184 This was deplored in NPB circles; repeatedly, NPB leaders stated that the NPB should have been the CC and that it was not necessary to found a new organisation. E.g.: G. Hulsman, 'Een wederwoord', *De Hervorming* 1925–20 (15 May 1925), 153–154; G. Hulsman, 'Een woord ter verheldering', *Ibid.* 1925–41 (10 October 1925), 322–324, here 322; [G. Hulsman in:] 'Kerknieuws – De crisis in den Ned. Protestantenvond', *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* LXXXII.292 (21 October 1925), evening paper A, 1; J.J. Meyer, 'Centrale Commissie of Protestantenvond', *Het Vaderland* (20 March 1926), morning paper B, 5; J.J. Meyer, 'Centrale Commissie of Protestantenvond', *De Hervorming* 1926–14 (3 April 1926), 105–106, here 106; J.J. Meyer, 'De Protestantenvond en het rapport van de commissie-Enschede', *Het Vaderland* (23 October 1926), evening paper D, 2; [C.R. Sijsling in:] 'Leiding en beleid in den bond', *De Hervorming* 1926–48 (27 November 1926), 377–379, here 378; [C.R. Sijsling in:] 'Kerknieuws – Nederlandsche Protestantenvond', *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* LXXXIII.333 (1 December 1926), morning paper A, 3; J.J. Meyer, 'De Ned. Protestantenvond', *Het Vaderland* (4 November 1930), evening paper D, 1.

Little Religions, ‘Liberal’ Tendencies, and Atheism

1 Liberal Protestantism Broadened into ‘Free Religiosity’?

In early 1923, H.G. van Wijngaarden (1876-1929), the then pastor of the Free Congregation in Amsterdam, took stock of the outcomes of a discussion that he had started several years before. Those outcomes, he had to conclude, were rather disappointing:

Already four years ago, the Federation of Free Religious Groups and Organisations was founded, and the simultaneous attempt was made to bring the liberal Protestant church communities closer together. How these ideas were applauded by some! How those endeavours encountered strong opposition among others! The [latter’s] fear was either that Christianity would be sold out to Theosophy, Spiritism, and liberal Judaism or that schisms and ecclesial destruction were intended, or that the holy domain of one’s own sacred community would be entered by [others’] unholy feet. These novelties [the Federation and the attempt to tighten modernists’ bonds, TK] did not find a hearing.¹

Later in 1923, one of the endeavours to which Van Wijngaarden refers here was realised after all: together with a handful of other organisations, the various denominational groups of liberal Protestants joined forces in the Central Commission for Liberal Protestantism, already mentioned in the previous two chapters. The CC was structured as a federation: the NPB, the Free Congregation, the associations of Reformed and Lutheran liberals, and the Remonstrant Brotherhood were separately represented within its framework in order to preserve each group’s identity and autonomy. The General Mennonite Society also associated itself with the CC, but only in the name of the Mennonite majority. This was so because, as its then chairman P. Feenstra, Jr. (1850-1936) explained, all Mennonites were liberal or *vrijzinnig*, in the sense that they championed the freedom of every individual to formulate his own confession of faith, but not every Mennonite could identify with the modernist movement; at the

1 [H.G. van Wijngaarden], ‘De federatiegedachte’, *Nieuwe Stemmen uit de Vrije Gemeente* VI (1923), 44-45, here 44. See also: [H.G. van Wijngaarden in:] ‘Kerknieuws – De federatiegedachte’, *Algemeen Handelsblad* xcv1.30893 (13 March 1923), 10.

time, the theological views of approximately one in every three Mennonites were (moderately) orthodox rather than modernist.²

In contrast, the other endeavour of which Van Wijngaarden made mention, the so-called '*Federatie van vrij-religieuze groepen en organisaties*', had already ended in failure prior to 1923 and would not be regenerated afterwards. While the CC consisted only of liberal Protestant groups, the Free Religious Federation, which Van Wijngaarden had himself founded in 1919, intended to bring those groups closer together within a broader framework of groups that, just like liberal Protestants themselves, offered religious alternatives to Christian (both Protestant and Catholic) orthodoxy. In Van Wijngaarden's view, liberal Protestantism was part of a larger cluster of spiritual currents that he (tried to) put together under the umbrella of 'free religiosity'. This cluster included Spiritism, Theosophy, and liberal Judaism – examples he uses in the above quote – as well as Christian Science, the Old Catholic Church, and a cluster of religious-philosophical-humanistic associations such as *De Nieuwe Gedachte* (The New Thought) and *De Middaghoogte* (The Meridian). What were the intentions and motivations behind this endeavour to assemble the modernist movement and those other 'free religious' groups in a federation? What was this federation supposed to do and pursue? Why was it founded around 1920 and not, for example, two or more decades earlier? Why was it, as Van Wijngaarden remarked in the above quote, welcomed by some and resisted by others? Why did it quickly perish? And why had the NPB, which was forced to let the CC play the role of a federation of liberal Protestant groups in 1923, even though this was its own intended role, been unable to play such a role in 1919?

In his standard work on liberal Protestantism, Lindeboom does not bother to deal with the Free Religious Federation at great length, feeling that "its development has been too insignificant and its achievement too negative."³ Yet the federation had more significance than Lindeboom acknowledges – not so much because of what it actually did – which was indeed little –, but because it stemmed from the ongoing discussion concerning the questions of how to define what modernism was and who belonged to the modernist movement – that is, questions regarding modernists' identity and the boundaries of the modernist movement. Chapter 3 has already analysed the attitudes that different generations and groups of modernists adopted towards orthodoxy. But, in search of its own identity, the modernist movement had not only to define its boundaries 'to the right', to Christian orthodoxy, but also 'to the left', to the

2 S. Voolstra (A. Voolstra, A.G. Hoekema and P. Visser eds.), *Beeldenstormer uit bewogenheid. Verzamelde opstellen van Sjouke Voolstra* (Hilversum 2005), 301–308.

3 Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III, 101.

occultist, humanistic, and idealistic 'little religions' that began to emerge as of the late nineteenth century and that Van Wijngaarden included under the umbrella of 'free religiosity'. Just as was the case with Van Wijngaarden's federation, the rise of these little religions provoked different reactions among modernists. Their rise was not the only development in religious life that aroused modernists' interest. The same went for potential alternatives to existing church life that began to emerge *within* Catholicism and orthodox Protestantism (such as Old Catholicism and the neo-Calvinist 'movement of youngsters'), 'liberal' tendencies in religions other than Christianity, and movements that pursued a change of mentality in society by 'spiritualising' education. Moreover, modernists were faced with a growing number of people who abandoned church life, and sometimes religious life altogether. Modernists' reactions to the emergence of all of these alternatives to orthodoxy – regardless of whether a particular alternative was religious or not – and the influence this phenomenon exerted on the development of the modernist movement are the subject of this chapter.

2 Modernism and the Rise of 'a Hundred and One Prophets'

In the introductory chapter, five processes were identified that are constitutive elements of 'modernisation'. Together with the development of a scientific worldview, starting in the early-modern era, two of these processes in particular contributed to the rise of what the French publicist J. Bois (1868-1943) called '*petites religions*' and what the historian J.M. Romein (1893-1962) described as 'a hundred and one prophets': the individualisation of life styles and the privatisation of religion. The little religions include, among others, Spiritism, Theosophy, Christian Science, Buddhist-oriented spirituality, Anthroposophy, and all other kinds of occult, esoteric, and mystical philosophies of life.⁴ The historian P. de Rooy considers them to be part of a larger 'humanitarian-idealistic' movement, also encompassing dietary, medical, and social reform 'isms' such as vegetarianism, teetotalism, antivivisectionism, and the disciples of the Russian anarchist L. Tolstoy (1828-1910).⁵ Although these isms were not

4 J. Bois, *Les petites religions de Paris* (Paris 1894); J.M. Romein, *The Watershed of Two Eras. Europe in 1900* (Middletown 1978), 499-500. See also: A.A. Kluvel, *Reis door de hel der onschuldigen. De expressieve politiek van de Nederlandse anti-vivisectionisten, 1890-1940* (Amsterdam 2000), 23, 247, note 2.

5 Romein, *The Watershed of Two Eras*, 494-508; P. de Rooy, 'Een hevig gewarrel. Humanitair idealisme en socialisme in Nederland rond de eeuwwisseling', *BMGN* CVI.4 (1991), 625-640, here 626, 640.

religious in themselves, their adherents often had religious motivations for embracing them. For instance, there was a strong feeling among Theosophists that a Theosophical outlook on life should automatically lead to a vegetarian and teetotaler life style.⁶ Notwithstanding their differences, the little religions can all be seen as attempts to harmonise religion and contemporary culture.⁷ They were all said to have a scientific, empirical, and logical basis. Spiritists claimed that individuals who had attained a certain level of spiritual enlightenment, called 'spiritual intermediaries', could communicate with the spirits of deceased people and could thus empirically verify the existence of an afterlife.⁸ Arguing that "matter, sin, and sickness are not real, but only illusions," Christian Science based itself on a standardised, 'scientific' method of praying and mental training, which, if followed correctly, would heal all mental and physical afflictions.⁹ Theosophy, to take a final example, was said to be evidence-based as well, and intended to blend contemporary science together with the wisdoms that could be distilled out of all world religions into an 'occult science'.¹⁰ Their intention of bringing religion, culture, and science into a satisfactory synthesis was a characteristic that the little religions had in common with Protestant modernism. A comparison between the little religions and modernism, both emerging in the second half of nineteenth century, shows that their likeness went even further.¹¹

The little religions were characterised by a high degree of eclecticism, combining elements of one religion with those of another. Nonetheless, most of them were rooted in, or largely inspired by, Christianity. Because of this, they managed to exert some attraction in Protestant circles. As the church historian D. Jansen shows, particularly Spiritism gained a conspicuous, albeit small, fol-

6 JJ. Poortman, 'Theosophie', in: W. Banning et al. (eds.), *Encyclopaedisch handboek van het moderne denken* (Arnhem 1950), 753-758, here 757.

7 L.K. Vermeer, "Als de tafel danst, dan wankelt de wetenschap". De relatie tussen spiritisme en wetenschap in Nederland rond 1900', *Gewina* xxx (2007), 26-43, here 29-30.

8 For the scientific claims of Spiritism, see, e.g.: E. Sargent, *The Scientific Basis of Spiritualism* (Boston 1881). Because 'Spiritualism' can refer to any non-materialistic outlook on life, the narrower term 'Spiritism' is used in this chapter. Cf.: E. von Hartmann (C.C. Massey ed.), *Spiritism* (Cambridge etc. 2012), 1.

9 O. Hammer, *Claiming Knowledge. Strategies of Epistemology from Theosophy to the New Age* (Leiden 2001), 445. For the scientific claims of Christian Science, see, e.g.: S. Gottschalk, *The Emergence of Christian Science in American Religious Life* (Berkeley etc. 1973), esp. 280-281.

10 For the scientific claims of Theosophy, see, e.g.: A. Marques, *Scientific Corroborations of Theosophy* (London 1908).

11 Cf.: E.G.E. van der Wall, 'Between Faith and Doubt: The Role of Fiction', *TF* xxxv.1 (December 2005), 56-75, here 62.

lowing among *evangelischen* in the third quarter of the nineteenth century.¹² In the eyes of some *evangelische* ministers, Spiritism proved that the souls of deceased people lived on after death and could appear in human shape during séances, making it plausible that the Gospel narratives about apparitions of Jesus after his crucifixion are indeed to be seen as historical facts. Decades later, some modernists felt attracted to Spiritism as well.¹³ Modernist ministers such as C. Hille Ris Lambers and A.H. van der Hoeve serve to show that one could simultaneously be a modernist and a Spiritist: in their opinion, Spiritism was just a 'supplement' to modernism, enabling modernists to acquire more assurance in their faith and endowing liberal Protestantism with more emotional intensity. In modernist circles, little religions were seen as 'signs of the times', as expressions of the (spiritual) period of transition modernists believed they were living in, and as confirmation of their conviction that modern man could not be satisfied by traditional forms of religion.¹⁴ Yet the opinion of ministers like Hille Ris Lambers and Van der Hoeve that the little religions were fully compatible with liberal Protestantism was anything but generally accepted. There was no consensus among modernists as to whether the little religions were to be placed within, on the fringes of, or completely outside of the modernist movement. In essence, it was around this question that all discussions of the little religions in modernist circles revolved.

Modernists and the adherents of little religions mostly belonged to the middle classes, causing the Marxist historian Romein to pejoratively call the latter "bourgeois, one-sided, unreal, decadent, pathological, and inhuman because of a lifeless humourlessness."¹⁵ The modernist movement and the little

12 D. Jansen, *Op zoek naar nieuwe zekerheid. Negentiende-eeuwse protestanten en het spiritisme* (s.l. [1994]).

13 D. Jansen, 'Slauerhoff, Hille Ris Lambers en het spiritisme', *It Beaken* LIV (1992), 155-173; D. Jansen, 'Remonstrant tussen unitarisme en spiritisme. Ds. Cornelis Willem van der Pot (1813-1891)', in: E.H. Cossee and H.D. Tjalsma (eds.), *Remonstranten en het unitarisme* (Utrecht 2000), 30-41, here 38; D. Jansen, 'Ds. Adriaan Hendrik van der Hoeve. Spiritist of alleen maar vrijzinnig en eigenzinnig?', *Fryslân* v.2 (July 1999), 21-22.

14 See, e.g.: B. Tideman Jz., 'Leestafel – "Mijn Jezus"', *De Hervorming* 1901-50 (14 December 1901), 397 [This issue is erroneously numbered as '1901-49']; H.Y. Groenewegen, 'Een nieuw christendom?', *Ibid.* 1905-09 (4 March 1905), 66-68, here 66; F.C.M. Boenders, 'Ingezonden – "De Nieuwe Gedachte" - Een teken des tijds', *Ibid.* 1916-11 (11 March 1916), 91; H. Oort, 'Hoofdartikelen – Referaat in de bijeenkomst van moderne theologen', *Ibid.* 1916-20 (13 May 1916), 162-164, here 163; De St., 'Leestafel – Uit de tijdschriften', *Ibid.* 1917-39 (29 September 1917), 321.

15 Quoted in: Kluvel, *Reis door de hel der onschuldigen*, 23. See also: F.G. Huisman and H. te Velde, 'Op zoek naar nieuwe vormen in wetenschap en politiek. De "medische" kleine geloven', *De Negentiende Eeuw* XXV.3 (2001), 129-136, here 129-130.

religions had in common the optimism, the idealism, and the faith in the almost unlimited abilities of man that were characteristic of the bourgeoisie in the last half of the nineteenth century and the *fin-de-siècle* era. The old-school modernist interpretation of 'sin' as a temporary human shortcoming, as an error that could be overcome through ethical self-improvement and the eradication of ignorance, somewhat resembled the Christian Scientist definition of 'sin' as a distortion of the human mind that could be nullified by thinking it away.¹⁶ Theosophy and modernism more or less shared the evolutionary idea that, by gaining more insight into the true nature of reality and mankind's relation to reality, humanity moved towards ultimate perfection, the completion of the Kingdom of God.¹⁷ An early twentieth-century ethical reform group called the '*Rein Leven-beweging*' ('Pure Life Movement'), whose members stressed the importance of sexual education, vegetarianism, and teetotalism, agreed with modernists that the roots of social wrongs were of a spiritual kind.¹⁸

The adherents of little religions and, as noted in chapter 6, first-generation and the majority of later-generation modernists believed that in order for society to be reformed, individuals had to be reformed.¹⁹ This conviction was, in turn, connected to modernism's strong emphasis on the value of 'personality' and 'individuality': people should be *individuals*, think for themselves, take responsibility for their own actions, acquire a *personal* faith through studying and soul-searching – in sum, realise their full spiritual potential. Aiding people in becoming individuals was the incentive behind modernists' and little religionists' social commitment. As chapter 7 shows, some modernists nonetheless came to embrace political socialism, contending that individual reform was not a prerequisite for social reform, but rather that individual reform would only be possible if the fabric of society were to be reformed first. The same applied to the adherents of little religions: although socialist leaders initially denegated them in words similar to those of Romein quoted above,

16 R.R. Losch, *The Many Faces of Faith. A Guide to World Religions and Christian Traditions* (Grand Rapids 2001), 190.

17 A. Stasulane, *Theosophy and Culture*. Nicholas Roerich (Rome 2005), 152; H.P. Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy. An Exposition of the Ethics, Science, and Philosophy* (s.l. [1889] 2007), 36.

18 F.L. Ortt, *De Rein Leven-Beweging. Ontstaan, doel, beginselen en organisatie der Rein Leven-beweging* (Amsterdam 1909), 5, 7; A.A. Kluvel, 'Felix Ortt. De kleine geloven als brug tussen wetenschap en geloof', *De Negentiende Eeuw* xxv.3 (2001), 137–146, here 145.

19 De Rooy, 'Een hevig gewarrel', 626; A. de Groot, 'De lust tot last. De Rein Leven Beweging als pionier in de strijd om de nieuwe mens', *Groniek* xxvi (1993), 55–64, here 59.

De Rooy notes that the former were disproportionally represented among the supporters of socialist politics in the early twentieth century.²⁰

A particular feature of the little religions was their receptivity to female leadership. As the gender and religious studies scholars Sered and Braude show, they gave women the chance to play an active, even a central, role in religious communities.²¹ It was no coincidence that the founders of Christian Science and Theosophy as well as many spiritual intermediaries during Spiritist séances were women. To quote the historian Bednarowski, Spiritism, Christian Science, and Theosophy had four characteristics in common that served to advance female leadership and equality between men and women: “a perception of the divine that deemphasized the masculine either by means of a bisexual divinity or an impersonal, nonanthropomorphic divine principle; a tempering or denial of the doctrine of the Fall; a denial of the need for a traditional ordained clergy; [and] a view of marriage that did not stress the married state and motherhood as the proper sphere for woman and her only means of fulfillment.”²² Furthermore, the emotionalism and sentimentalism, or, in the eyes of critics, ‘hysteria’, associated with little religions were seen as typically ‘feminine’ traits.²³ Within Protestantism, modernists were most favourable to female leadership: they were the first to accept women in the offices of minister, elder, and deacon in the early twentieth century, although voices rejecting the appointment of women in ecclesial offices continued to be heard among them.²⁴

Modernists on whom little religions exerted some attraction usually did not defend their cause by highlighting similarities between little religions and modernism, but by characterising the former as supplementary to the latter. Some of their fellow modernists who felt no attraction to little religions them-

20 De Rooy, ‘Een hevig gewarrel’, 639-640.

21 A.D. Braude, ‘The Perils of Passivity. Women's Leadership in Spiritualism and Christian Science’, in: C.L. Wessinger (ed.), *Women's Leadership in Marginal Religions. Explorations outside the Mainstream* (Urbana 1993), 55-67, here 56; S.S. Sered, *Priestess, Mother, Sacred Sister. Religions Dominated by Women* (Oxford etc. 1994), 43-45.

22 M.F. Bednarowski, ‘Outside the Mainstream. Women's Religion and Women Religious Leaders in Nineteenth Century America’, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* XLVIII.2 (1980), 207-231, here 209. See also: W. de Blécourt, ‘De macht van de vrouwelijke hand. De feminisering van het magnetisme rond 1900’, *De Negentiende Eeuw* XXV.3 (2001), 147-160.

23 See, e.g.: D. DuPont, *Writing Teresa. The Saint from Ávila at the fin-de-siglo* (Plymouth 2012), 7.

24 M.P.A. de Baar and F. Pitstra, ‘Van “artikel van weelde” tot beroep. Discussies over de geschiktheid van vrouwen voor de theologiestudie en het predikambt, 1898-1913’, in: M.P.A. de Baar et al. (eds.), *Honderd jaar vrouwen op de kansel, 191-2011* (Hilversum 2011), 15-36.

selves were willing to go along with that idea, arguing that little religions could not do any harm and might do some good in individual cases. One of them was the Dutch Reformed minister M.C. van Wijhe (1881-1953), who wrote in 1915, in spite of not being an adherent of Christian Science himself, that the Christian Scientific method of 'healing by praying' could lead to a genuine recovery from illness.²⁵ Others thought that the little religions should be looked upon with sympathy, seeing them as expressions of a free development of religious life and claiming that all sincere attempts to attain spiritual enlightenment should be appreciated and encouraged.²⁶ To quote one such modernist, all "mystical tendencies," by which he referred to Spiritism and Theosophy, were "little creeks, which will be brought together by God into one big stream of healthy and vital religious life."²⁷ It was also recognised that the adherents of little religions shared with modernists a rejection of a materialistic worldview, which denied the autonomous existence of a spiritual realm.²⁸ In the eyes of some, modernists should not be hesitant to borrow insights from little religionists, since these insights could invigorate their own inner lives. As the minister-lawyer F.C.M. Boenders (1887-1955) wrote in 1918, alternative spirituality had the potential to enrich modernism and vice versa; therefore, "let us hope that we, modernists, will be able to get through to [little religionists] and that they, in turn, will be able to reach us. There is a wealth of devotion on our left, unknown to many of us."²⁹ The Dutch Reformed Spiritist propagandist J. van Rees-van Nauta Lemke (1854-1928) even went so far as to affirm that Spiritist teachings *completed* modernism, and that modernist ministers would no longer have to complain about empty or half-full churches if they sermonised about the immortality of the human soul with absolute certainty. Spiritism could give them that certainty.³⁰

25 M.C. van Wijhe, 'Ingezonden', *De Hervorming* 1915-51 (18 December 1915), 466. The former Mennonite minister H. Bakels expressed himself in similar terms with regard to Spiritism. See: H. Bakels, 'Ingezonden – Kloppen aan de verkeerde deur', *Ibid.* 1922-32 (12 August 1922), 254.

26 P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., 'Tot vrijheid geroepen', *Ibid.* 1903-26 (27 June 1903), 201-202, here 202; J. Herderscheë, 'Leestafel – "De ware weg"', *Ibid.* 1917-09 (3 March 1917), 72.

27 M. van de Westerwaert, 'Hoofdartikelen – De tegenwoordige zucht naar mystiek', *Ibid.* 1916-08 (19 February 1916), 57-58, here 58.

28 M.C. van Mourik Broekman, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Waarde in het occultisme', *Ibid.* 1919-42 (18 October 1919), 187-188; E. Vreede, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Rudolf Steiner', *Ibid.* 1921-06 (12 February 1921), 43.

29 F.C.M. Boenders, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Aan ds. H. Bakels', *Ibid.* 1918-33 (17 August 1918), 130.

30 [J. van Rees-van Nauta Lemke in:] M.C. van Mourik Broekman, 'Hoofdartikelen – De stormloop der spiritisten', *Ibid.* 1916-17 (22 April 1916), 134-135, here 135.

Other modernists, however, were not convinced of the harmlessness of the little religions. They did not hesitate to depict these as 'leading to idiocy', 'superstitious', 'delusional', 'aberrant', 'bizarre', and 'phantasmal'.³¹ Notwithstanding the beneficial effect they might have on one's faith, these modernists argued, the little religions should not be combined with a modernist conviction.³² In modernist discussions, six arguments were put forward to substantiate this claim.

First, it was denied in the modernist movement that the little religions were really as scientifically based as their adherents claimed they were. The Remonstrant minister P. Eldering made a profound study of Spiritism in the 1910s, leading him to conclude that "the Spiritist hypothesis," the postulate that spirits of deceased people can make themselves known through 'intermediaries' and even visible in so-called 'materialisations', is "scientifically unsupported."³³ Yet, notwithstanding obvious cases of charlatanry and fits of frenzy, Eldering did acknowledge that occult occurrences could as such happen.³⁴ What he doubted was Spiritists' claims that these occurrences were the result of the activation of spirits living in an invisible 'world of ghosts'. While arguing with Hille Ris Lambers in the columns of *De Hervorming*, he repeatedly asked this

31 See, e.g.: 'Buitenland', *De Hervorming* 1877-07 (17 February 1877), 3; 'Het spiritisme', *De Protestant* 111.49 (5 December 1885), 1-2; J.W., 'Ingezonden stukken – Jammerlijke afdwalingen', *De Hervorming* 1886-14 (3 April 1886), 56; L. Knappert, 'Paschen', *Ibid.* 1893-13 (1 April 1893), 49-50, here 49; J.H. Maronier, 'Theosophie', *Ibid.* 1893-28 (15 July 1893), 109-110, here 110; [H. de Lang], 'Buitenland – Nog een woordje over mrs. Eddy en de Christian Science', *Ibid.* 1910-23 (4 June 1910), 180-181, here 181; [K. Meijer in: J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Berichten, enz. – "Nog eens over theosophie"', *Ibid.* 1911-06 (11 February 1911), 43-44, here 44; C.S.K., 'Wandelen met God', *Ibid.* 1924-01 (5 January 1924), 1.

32 M.C. van Mourik Broekman, 'Hoofdartikel – Hiernamaals-voorstellingen', *Ibid.* 1922-24 (17 June 1922), 185-187; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – De aarde in den hemel', *Ibid.* 1922-25 (24 June 1922), 195-196; Proost and De Haas, *Het vrijzinnig protestantisme* 11, 69-70.

33 P. Eldering, 'Ingezonden – Antwoord aan dr. C. Hille Ris Lambers', *De Hervorming* 1916-51 (16 December 1916), 445-446, here 445. See also: P. Eldering, 'Ingezonden stukken – Het spiritisme en de godsdienst', *Ibid.* 1912-37 (14 September 1912), 294-295; [P. Eldering in:] 'Nederlandsche Protestantenvond – Leiden e.o.', *Ibid.* 1913-10 (8 March 1913), 73; [P. Eldering in:] M.C. van Mourik Broekman, 'Hoofdartikelen – De stormloop der spiritisten', *Ibid.* 1916-17 (22 April 1916), 134-135, here 134; P. Eldering, 'Ingezonden – Het spiritisme in de laatste algemeene vergadering van den Protestantenvond', *Ibid.* 1916-48 (25 November 1916), 421-422; P. Eldering, 'Hoofdartikelen – Spiritisme', *Ibid.* 1917-19 (12 May 1917), 155-156. A decade later, the Mennonite minister F. Dijkema argued similarly with regard to Theosophy. See: F. Dijkema, *Theosofie als wetenschap* (Huis ter Heide 1928).

34 See also: K.F. Proost and G. Horreüs de Haas, *Het vrijzinnig protestantisme* 11. *In zijne verhouding tot boeddhisme, mohammedanisme, occultisme, materialisme en humanisme* (Huis ter Heide 1927), 83.

Spiritist-minded minister to produce conclusive evidence of the truth of the Spiritist hypothesis.³⁵ According to Eldering, Spiritists based their interpretations of spontaneous events exclusively on the testimonies of *other* Spiritists, as a result of which they all referred to each other to prove themselves right instead of appealing to irrefutable and verifiable experiments. Modern psychology and neurology, he continued, showed that the incidents that Spiritists attributed to apparitions could rather have something to do with nervous disorders or mental disturbances. Even if science was wrong in this respect, occult phenomena still did not prove the existence of spirits – they simply showed that there are unknown energies slumbering inside human beings.³⁶ By extension, Eldering's conviction that Spiritism lacked a scientific foundation and scientific verification could be applied to other little religions as well. H.C. Lohr, for example, chided Theosophists for brushing aside scientific objections by alleging that some elect persons had a 'sixth sense', providing them with wisdom kept hidden from others.³⁷

Second, modernists with an unfavourable outlook on little religions regarded occult experiences as autosuggestive, the results of nervous and psychological diseases or illusions.³⁸ According to them, Spiritists simply interpreted extrasensory events by using predetermined explanatory schemes. H.U. Meyboom even depicted Christian Science as "part of the human tragicomedy."³⁹ Contrary to the contention that the little religions should be appreciated for challenging materialism, ministers like Eldering affirmed the opposite, given that Spiritists came up with alleged 'materialisations' of spirits as the ultimate proof of the truth of their religious views.⁴⁰ Genuine religious life should not be dependent on such external 'support'. Besides, the messages that

35 P. Eldering, 'Ingezonden', *De Hervorming* 1914-20 (16 May 1914), 175; P. Eldering, 'Ingezonden – Antwoord aan dr. C. Hille Ris Lambers', *Ibid.* 1916-51 (16 December 1916), 445-446. See also: H. de Lang, 'Redactioneel – Geestverschijningen', *Ibid.* 1916-51 (16 December 1916), 443.

36 P. Eldering, *Het hedendaagsch spiritisme in zijne wetenschappelijke en godsdienstige waarde beoordeeld* (Zaltbommel 1917). See also: P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., 'Spiritisme en theosophie', *Stemmen uit de Vrije Gemeente* XXVII (1904), 221-248, here 233.

37 H.C. Lohr, 'Ingezonden stukken', *De Hervorming* 1906-29 (21 July 1906), 229.

38 Hugenholtz, Jr., 'Spiritisme en theosophie', 230, 245; Proost and De Haas, *Het vrijzinnig protestantisme* II, 79.

39 'Stadsnieuws – Vergadering moderne theologen', *Het Nieuws van den Dag* 1909-12067 (22 April 1909), 6. See also: R.M.F. Houwink, 'Met onze lezers – Christian Science: de christelijke wetenschap?', *De Stroom* VII.52 (1 December 1928), 2-3.

40 J. van Konijnenburg, 'Binnenland – De Goessche kwestie', *De Hervorming* 1885-40 (3 October 1885), 158-159, here 159; [P. Eldering in:] 'Nederlandsche Protestantenbond – Gouda', *Ibid.* 1912-14 (6 April 1912), 105.

Spiritists were said to have received during séances were all trivial and insignificant. What sense did it make for spirits to communicate “nonsense” instead of helpful insights for achieving spiritual enlightenment?⁴¹

Third, some felt that the little religions had more in common with Protestant orthodoxy than with modernism.⁴² The very nature of the little religions was supernaturalistic, as they were based on the thought that humans needed revelation from above, in the form of concealed ‘knowledge’, to be enabled to become fully ‘illuminated’.⁴³ Connected to this, monist modernists disqualified occult faiths as dualistic: Spiritism postulated the existence of a supernatural ‘realm of spirits’, while Christian Science made a distinction between spirit and matter, God and man, and good and evil.⁴⁴ Another aspect that orthodox Protestants and the adherents of most little religions were said to share with each other was the way in which they read the Bible. As mentioned, Spiritists, for example, regarded their interpretation of occult phenomena as apparitions to be the most logical explanation of the materialisations of Jesus as described in the New Testament. However, historical-critical biblical studies proved that these New Testament texts should not be taken literally at all.⁴⁵ Other modernists straightforwardly denied that the little religions had any connection to Protestantism whatsoever. The adherents of Christian Science and Anthroposophy in particular might be Bible-centred and use Christian imagery, but they only did so selectively: they paged through the Bible in order to find texts that they could interpret as confirmations of their hypotheses.⁴⁶

Fourth, although both the modernist movement and the little religions recruited their following primarily from the bourgeois classes, the little religions were said to be ‘elitist’ and to lack ‘popular support’ in modernist circles. While modernists themselves faced similar accusations from orthodox Protestants,⁴⁷

41 H. de Lang, ‘Redactioneel – Geestverschijningen’, *De Hervorming* 1916-51 (16 December 1916), 443.

42 E.g.: P.B. Westerdijk, *De nieuwere theosofie, van vrijzinnig-godsdienstig standpunt beoordeeld* (Assen 1906), 118; H. de Lang, ‘Buitenland – Annie Besant en de vrijzinnige godsdienstopvatting’, *De Hervorming* 1912-33 (17 August 1912), 260-261, here 261; N.A. Bruining, *Geestelijke stroomingen* (Amsterdam 1923), 119, 134.

43 [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘Binnenland – Treurige vruchten van het supranaturalisme’, *De Hervorming* 1885-29 (18 July 1885), 114.

44 [H. de Lang], ‘Buitenland – De kerk van de Nieuwe Gedachte’, *Ibid.* 1913-13 (29 March 1913), 101.

45 J.C.V., ‘Leestafel – “Het land aan gene zijde” en “Het goed recht van het spiritualisme”’, *Ibid.* 1909-28 (10 July 1909), 221.

46 E.g.: Bruining, *Geestelijke stroomingen*, 109-110, 135.

47 G. Heuvelman, ‘Ingezonden – Nog eens: theosophie’, *De Hervorming* 1916-32 (5 August 1916), 274.

some did not hesitate to mock Christian Science as having no appeal outside of "ladies' circles" and to discredit Theosophy as something with which only "ladies and unbalanced youngsters" were concerned.⁴⁸ The perceived overrepresentation of women within the little religions and the 'female' sentimentality associated with them were accentuated to argue that they should not be taken too seriously. Eldering, here again, questioned the credibility of Spiritism by calling it "remarkable" that most mediums were women and, what is more, women "of Anglo-Saxon birth"; "the Germanic race," he condescendingly remarked, "seems to produce fewer and also less powerful spiritual intermediaries."⁴⁹ Using nationalist and gender terminology was a common disqualification strategy at the time. Eldering ridiculed Spiritism by sketching a dystopic society in which it would have a massive appeal:

If Spiritism, in the Netherlands and abroad, were to have millions of adherents and would attract intellectuals, professors, doctors, judges, ministers, teachers, educators [. . .], the strangest things could happen. The world would be a dangerous place for non-Spiritists. [. . .] Imagine what our country and nation would look like [if there were] one million individuals who think it possible that unearthly beings, evil ones and less evil ones [. . .], can influence people, give them advice, stimulate or discourage them to do certain things, commit arson, throw people into the water, hang them on trees.⁵⁰

This horror scenario, Eldering acknowledged, lay still in the future, but it was not an illusion. Spiritism was an actual threat to spiritual well-being and social stability. Accordingly, modernist ministers in particular should see it as their task to stop Spiritism from spreading.⁵¹

Fifth, as Van Mourik Broekman wrote in 1922, "it is odd to note that so many spiritual movements that emerged in the preceding century and have created organisations outside of church life, such as Theosophy, Christian Science, the Salvation Army, and [Anthroposophy] as well, are centred around one individual."⁵² Although he admitted that this was conducive to their strength – he

48 [H. de Lang], 'Buitenland – Een rebellie tegen mevr. Baker Eddy de kop ingedrukt', *De Hervorming* 1910-13 (26 March 1910), 102; P. van der Meulen, 'Ingezonden – Theosophie', *Ibid.* 1916-30 (22 July 1916), 257.

49 Eldering, *Het hedendaagsch spiritisme*, 89.

50 *Ibid.*, 166.

51 *Ibid.*, 167-168.

52 M.C. van Mourik Broekman, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Karakter der anthroposophie', *De Hervorming* 1922-16 (22 April 1922), 122-124, here 123.

contrasted powerful, Kuypers-centred neo-Calvinism with marginalising, leaderless modernism to reinforce his point –, other modernists blamed the little religions for it. Already in 1910, H. de Lang had approvingly quoted an article in which Mary Baker Eddy (1821-1910), the ‘founding mother’ of Christian Science, was accused of being a fraud, exploiting the gullibility of people who sincerely yearned for spiritual awakening. The gist of this article was that little religions required absolute submission to the teachings of their founders.⁵³ The little religions should accordingly not be seen as expressions of the free development of religious life, modernists such as De Lang felt, but rather as impediments to this development.

Sixth, there was criticism in the modernist movement of the way in which the life reform movements that accompanied the rise of the little religions put their principles into practice. The aim of the *Rein Leven-beweging* to spiritually arm individuals against bodily temptations, for example, was seen as praiseworthy in itself in modernist circles, since such temptations were detrimental to one’s inner life. Yet the uninhibitedness with which the *Rein Leven-beweging* discussed sexual matters met with hardly any approval, for “victims of [sexual] sins will not be cured by namby-pamby argumentations.”⁵⁴ More than that, it was counterproductive, as it would arouse “a morbid interest in sexual matters.”⁵⁵ Imparting carnal knowledge to young adults more than once, and by people other than their parents, would “desecrate and defile these sacred and intimate things.” Moreover, the *Rein Leven-beweging* was accused of being Pharisaic: it wanted to help individuals in internalising strong sexual morals, yet without strengthening individuals’ spiritual lives as a whole.⁵⁶ Movements for the advancements of vegetarianism and teetotalism received similar criticism. In 1905, to take just one example, De Lang chided those who claimed that Jesus of Nazareth had been a teetotaler and a vegetarian for arguing that teetotalism and vegetari-

53 H. de Lang, ‘Buitenland – Krijtstreden bij de dingen van den dag’, *De Hervorming* 1910-16 (16 April 1910), 126.

54 [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Berichten, enz. – “Rein Leven”’, *Ibid.* 1901-32 (10 August 1901), 250-251, here 251. See also: [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Berichten, enz. – Goede woorden van Jan Ligthart’, *Ibid.* 1912-47 (23 November 1912), 381.

55 [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Berichten, enz. – “Rein Leven”’, *Ibid.* 1901-32 (10 August 1901), 250-251, here 251. Similar criticism was uttered in: S.K. Bakker, ‘Rein leven’, *De Blijde Wereld* 1v.7 (8 December 1905), 2-3; 1v.8 (15 December 1905), 1-2; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Berichten, enz. – Een goed woord’, *De Hervorming* 1905-51 (23 December 1905), 404. A response to Bakker’s criticism was given in: S.C. Kijlstra, ‘Rein leven’, *De Blijde Wereld* 1v.10 (29 December 1905), 2-3; 1v.11 (5 January 1906), 1-2.

56 S.K. Bakker, ‘Rein leven’, *Ibid.* 1v.8 (15 December 1905), 1-2, here 2.

anism were intrinsic to true Christianity.⁵⁷ He and others were not against temperance and animal protection as such, but blamed the most zealous advocates of these causes for denouncing Christians who disagreed with them.

3 Modernists and Adherents of Little Religions: Attraction or Repulsion?

The arguments used in the modernist movement to either defend or criticise the little religions did not alter as time progressed – in the 1920s, the same arguments were used as in the 1880s. Of all little religions, Spiritism was most discussed in modernist circles. It was the first little religion with which modernists were confronted and the one evoking the most response among them. The reason for this is that Spiritism provided answers to questions that were particularly debated in *liberal* Protestantism: the immortality of the soul and the existence of an afterlife. Historical-critical biblical studies unsettled the belief in life after death. Spiritism, on the other hand, pretended to 'prove', by means of apparitions during séances, that the death of one's physical body was indeed not the end of one's existence.⁵⁸ In the eyes of some, it could thus solve a question that modernism could not.

Contrary to the arguments as such, the *interest* in the little religions did change over time; it increased in the early twentieth century, peaking in around 1920. A first reason for that had to do with a general trend in society at large: particularly in bourgeois circles, it came to be acknowledged that a purely materialistic outlook on life, as prompted by science, was unsatisfactory, neglecting inner life.⁵⁹ New philosophies of life to fill this spiritual vacuum came to be looked for. Occultism, esotericism, and mysticism, including Spiritism, Theosophy, and Christian Science, all three of which originated in the

57 H. de Lang, 'Jezus geheelonthouder en vegetariër', *De Hervorming* 1905-27 (8 July 1905), 209-210.

58 For these claims, see, e.g.: Hugenholtz, 'Spiritisme en Theosophie', 230-231; M. Beversluis, *Spiritualisme en spiritisme* (Baarn 1909), 38-40; Eldering, *Het hedendaagsch spiritisme*, passim; Bruining, *Geestelijke stroomingen*, 90.

59 J.Th.M. Bank and M.B. van Buuren, 1900. *Hoogtij van burgerlijke cultuur* (The Hague 2000), 288; K. Wils, *De omweg van de wetenschap. Het positivisme en de Belgische en Nederlandse intellectuele cultuur, 1845-1914* (Amsterdam 2005), 379; D.M. Baneke, *Synthetisch denken. Natuurwetenschappers over hun rol in een moderne maatschappij, 1900-1940* (Hilversum 2008), 123-126, 137, 201.

second half of the nineteenth century, therefore began to attract more attention. The spiritual confusion and insecurity that the First World War caused in the mid-1910s intensified this trend, bringing into being all kinds of occult alternatives to the philosophies of life of the world that had died in battle, such as Anthroposophy and the abovementioned humanitarian-idealistic association *De Nieuwe Gedachte* in the Netherlands. A second reason had to do with a related trend in the modernist movement itself: dissatisfaction with the intellectualism, monism, and optimism of old-school modernism manifested itself to the full around 1900. Some modernists, namely the malcontents, gave vent to this dissatisfaction by turning 'right', by falling back on 'orthodox' terminology and imagery. Others, whose numbers were considerably smaller, turned 'left', supplementing their liberal Protestant faith with 'occult' elements. This last development raised the question of whether the NPB, and the modernist movement in general, should try to incorporate the little religions and their adherents or not.

One of the first and most widely discussed modernists with little religionist sympathies was the Dutch Reformed minister L.A. Bähler (1867-1941). In two 1903 publications, he evidenced his attraction to Buddhism, even regarding it as ethically, spiritually, and intellectually superior to historical Christianity.⁶⁰ By so doing, he caused a good deal of controversy both in orthodox circles – resulting in the founding of the *Gereformeerde Bond* (Reformed League) as a new faction within the Dutch Reformed Church in 1906, after the Dutch Reformed synod had rejected an orthodox call to dismiss Bähler from his ministry⁶¹ – and in the modernist movement. Highly condemnatory reviews of Bähler's publications appeared in *De Hervorming*.⁶² Noticing how much discussion Bähler provoked, the moderately orthodox Dutch Reformed minister A.W. Bronsveld (1839-1924) could not avoid the impression "that many modernists secretly want the modernist movement to be delivered from such an odd fish, who besmirches their cause."⁶³ The fear was that views such as Bähler's were grist for the mill of orthodox Protestants, confirming them in their opinion that modernists were not truly Christians – hence the question

60 L.A. Bähler, *Reïncarnatie en karma. Twee preeken* (Oosterwolde 1903); *Het "christelijke" barbarendom in Europa* (Blaricum 1903).

61 C.N. Impeta, *Kaart van kerkelijk Nederland* (Kampen 1961), 55.

62 Both *Het "christelijke" barbarendom in Europa* and *Reïncarnatie en karma* received negative reviews in *De Hervorming*. See: H.Y. Groenewegen, 'Een proeve van boeddhistische zending', *De Hervorming* 1903-19 (9 May 1903), 146-147; I.M.J. Hoog, 'Leestafel – "Reïncarnatie en karma"', *Ibid.* 1904-06 (6 February 1904), 46.

63 [A.W. Bronsveld in:] C. Hille Ris Lambers, 'Leestafel – "Geestelijke wasdom"', *Ibid.* 1905-51 (23 December 1905), 405-406, here 406.

of whether modernists should tolerate a crypto-Buddhist in their midst. Yet, the NPB did not alter its policy of welcoming everyone who could reconcile NPB membership with his conscience.⁶⁴

In fact, in the 1910s, when the rise of the vvH and the 'ecclesial turn' challenged the position of the NPB in modernist circles, there were those who urged the NPB to fully incorporate the little religions into the modernist movement.⁶⁵ By focusing more on *buitenkerkelijke vroomheid*, i.e. religious life outside the churches, than it had done so far, the NPB could show that it still had a reason to exist. Those suggesting that the NPB should try to draw the little religions more tightly into its orbit argued that confessionalism was just as big a threat to the adherents of these religions as it was to modernists and that the former thus belonged in the movement of the latter. Since the name '*Protestantenbond*' might give rise to the misunderstanding that its membership was restricted to Protestants in an ecclesial sense instead of open to everyone with a Protestant 'attitude of mind', the NPB should increase its efforts to make clear that its "doors [were indeed] wide open."⁶⁶ A.H. van der Hoeve, from whom this quote comes, thus encouraged the NPB not to wait for little religionists to knock on its doors, but rather to proactively reach out to them.

In 1916, the dissension between those modernists who were of the same mind as Van der Hoeve, and those who were not, exploded. At the general NPB assembly held that year, A.E.F. Junod stated that if the modernist movement wanted to have a future, the NPB had to make room for the little religions. To

64 The tolerant attitude the NPB was formally – that is, on the basis of its own articles of association – obliged to adopt in the purely hypothetical matter of a Buddhist who applied for membership became proverbial for the open admittance policy of the NPB. See: 'Kerknieuws – Ned. Protestanten Bond', *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* LXXVII.298 (27 October 1920), evening paper B, 2; G. Hulsman, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – De Boeddhist', *De Hervorming* 1920-45 (13 November 1920), 178; H.U. Meyboom, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Een Buddhist in den Protestantenbond', *Ibid.* 1920-47 (27 November 1920), 187; G. Hulsman, 'Ingezonden', *Ibid.* 1920-48 (4 December 1920), 191; H.U. Meyboom, 'Ingezonden', *Ibid.* 1920-49 (11 December 1920), 195. Views on Buddhism among various modern theologians are cited in: M.J.H.M. Poorthuis and T.A.M. Saleminck, *Lotus in de Lage Landen. De geschiedenis van het boeddhisme in Nederland: beeldvorming van 1840 tot heden* (Almere 2009).

65 E.g.: K., 'Berichten, enz. – Geestelijk leven', *De Hervorming* 1912-13 (30 March 1912), 100-101, here 101; A.H. van der Hoeve, 'Redactioneel – Ter voorkoming van misverstand', *Ibid.* 1917-34 (25 August 1917), 280.

66 A.H. van der Hoeve, 'Bondsleven – De deuren wijd open', *Ibid.* 1918-06 (9 February 1918), 23. See also: Van der Hoeve, *Het werk van den Nederlandschen Protestantenvbond*, 12-14. Van der Hoeve felt some attraction to Spiritism himself. See: Jansen, 'Ds. Adriaan Hendrik van der Hoeve'.

make modernists more acquainted with the realm of thought to which these religions gave expression, it was decided that a brochure on Spiritism would be issued under the auspices of the NPB. Those who disagreed with Junod loudly protested, fearing that such a brochure was meant to curry favour with the Spiritists. Probably to reassure them, P. Eldering, who had been known to criticise Spiritism previously, was asked to write the brochure. This, in turn, irritated those who did agree with Junod: they objected that the NPB should not publish a brochure in which Spiritism would be placed in a bad light.⁶⁷ Their objections were rejected, which indicates that they were in the minority.⁶⁸ Eldering could not understand what all the fuss was about: ten years earlier, he recalled, the NPB had issued a brochure in which the Mennonite minister P.B. Westerdijk (1869-1954) pointed out flaws in Theosophy. Why then, he asked, should the NPB treat Spiritists with kid gloves?⁶⁹

Eldering completed his brochure several months later. In it, he reiterated his earlier point that modernists would do best to ignore Spiritism, as long as its epistemological basis remained so uncertain. Eldering again took issue with the Spiritists' claim that Spiritism was scientific. Séances did not prove anything about the immortality of the soul. Moreover, the existence of an afterlife was a matter of faith in modernism, while it was a matter of science in Spiritism.⁷⁰ J.J. Bleeker recognised that this was indeed what distinguished modernism from the little religions. He accordingly believed that most individuals were attracted to Spiritism's claim to provide certainty about life after death, not because they longed for an eternal communion with God. The appeal of Theosophy, he added, was in its detailed system of doctrines that tried to explain even the smallest aspects of reality, a feature it shared with neo-Calvinism. Nonetheless, Bleeker was not against attempts to tighten the bonds between modernists and the adherents of little religions: although the psyche of the latter might differ from that of the former, it could be beneficial to both if they got to know each other better.⁷¹ J. Lindeboom, however, doubted this;

67 Van Loenen Martinet, not being a Spiritist himself, even accused Eldering of seeing Spiritism as his "private hunting ground." Quoted from: [J. van Loenen Martinet in:] P. Eldering, 'Ingezonden – Het spiritisme in de laatste algemeene vergadering van den Protestantenbond', *De Hervorming* 1916-48 (25 November 1916), 421-422, here 421.

68 'Nederlandsche Protestantenbond', *Provinciale Overijsselsche en Zwolsche Courant* 1916.250 (24 October 1916), 9.

69 P. Eldering, 'Ingezonden – Het spiritisme in de laatste algemeene vergadering van den Protestantenbond', *De Hervorming* 1916-48 (25 November 1916), 421-422, here 421.

70 Eldering, *Het hedendaagsch spiritisme*, 168-190; Noordegraaf, *P. Eldering*, 30.

71 J.J. Bleeker, 'Hoofdartikelen – Wat mankeert er toch aan ons?', *De Hervorming* 1917-05 (3 February 1917), 35-36, here 35.

the modernist movement might grow numerically by 'paying court' to little religionists, but would it also grow in quality, he rhetorically asked?⁷²

H.G. van Wijngaarden answered that question in the affirmative. In October 1918, he suggested the founding of a federation combining organisations embedded in the modernist movement and associations affiliated with the little religions.⁷³ By joining forces, Van Wijngaarden expected that those religious individuals who were neither Roman Catholics nor orthodox Protestants could make themselves better heard and consequently exert more influence in social life.⁷⁴ His proposal was thus explicitly meant to challenge the position of those religious communities that set the tone in Dutch society and politics at the time. In addition, he hoped that a closer alliance of modernists and other 'religious liberals' might be a foreshadowing of 'the church of the future'.⁷⁵

On 6 February 1919, Van Wijngaarden convened a meeting to discuss his suggestion. Several modernists attended the meeting on behalf of the VvH, the NPB, the Free Congregation, the Remonstrant Brotherhood, the General Mennonite Society, and the General Association of Liberal Lutherans. In addition, three other groups largely consisting of modernists were separately represented: the so-called 'Woodbrookers' and religious socialists, both of whom are dealt with in chapter 7, and members of the *Godsdienstig-Democratische Kring* (Religious Democratic Circle), on whom chapter 9 focuses in more detail. Theosophists, liberal Jews, and members of the Old Catholic Church were present as well. Van Wijngaarden justified the absence of Spiritists and members of *De Nieuwe Gedachte* by arguing that the former could not all be counted among religious liberals, while the latter refrained from self-identifying as 'religious' in the first place.⁷⁶ The outcome of the meeting was twofold. First, it was decided that neither the Free Congregation nor the NPB was capable of transforming itself into the federation that Van Wijngaarden envisioned, because history had given them "a character that is too specific, a cachet that is too

72 J. Lindeboom, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Gedachten uit en over Rome', *De Hervorming* 1920-07 (21 February 1920), 25.

73 [H.G. van Wijngaarden], 'De kerk der toekomst', *Nieuwe Stemmen uit de Vrije Gemeente* 1.9 (1918), 1-11. See also: 'Kerknieuws – De kerk der toekomst', *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* LXXV.330 (28 November 1918), evening paper A, 1; A.C. Schade van Westrum, 'Kerkelijk leven – Een wensch', *De Hervorming* 1919-03 (18 January 1919), 10-11; A.H. van der Hoeve, 'Kerkelijk leven – Federatie', *Ibid.* 1919-06 (8 February 1919), 23; [H.G. van Wijngaarden], 'De kerk der toekomst', *Nieuwe Stemmen uit de Vrije Gemeente* 11 (1919), 2-9, 30-31.

74 This point was repeated during the meeting that Van Wijngaarden convened on 6 February 1919. See: 'Kerknieuws – Vergadering inzake kerk-organisatie', *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* LXXVI.37 (7 February 1919), evening paper B, 2.

75 Van Wijngaarden, 'De kerk der toekomst'.

76 [H.G. van Wijngaarden], 'De federatie vrijreligieuze groepen en organisaties', *Nieuwe Stemmen uit de Vrije Gemeente* 11 (1919), 42-47, here 44-45.

idiosyncratic.”⁷⁷ Religious liberals who were not modernists would feel that they were playing second fiddle in an existing organisation with a markedly modernist character, whereas the denominational groups of modernists were not willing to federate within the framework of an organisation with which they more and more experienced a conflict of interests. Those aspiring to the incorporation of the little religions into the NPB, of whom Van der Hoeve was the most prominent example, were obviously disappointed with the decision, but reconciled themselves to it nonetheless: within an entirely new federation, they expected that the NPB would still be able to exert influence on religious life outside of the churches.⁷⁸ Second, it was decided to form a committee charged with the task of coming up with detailed plans.⁷⁹ Several weeks later, this committee presented draft regulations and a declaration of intent: by organising conferences, making joint public appearances, and encouraging all groups involved to write in each other’s magazines, the federation-to-be intended to create permanent interrelationships between all ‘non-dogmatic’ communities of faith and to permeate society and culture with the principles of ‘free religiosity’ – whatever those principles might be.⁸⁰

A first *Congres van vrij-religieusen* (Free Religious Congress) was held in May 1919. Due to complaints about their absence at the meeting held three months earlier, Spiritists were represented this time. The same went for free-masons. The anti-atheist association *De Middaghoogte* (The Meridian), the name of which was an allusion to the freethinkers’ club *De Dageraad* (The Dawn), had been invited and willing to send representatives to the congress as well, but had not been able to do so.⁸¹ Yet, contrary to the involvement of these new groups, the Old Catholic Church, the Woodbrookers, and the *Godsdienstig-Democratische Kring*, all of which had been represented at the meeting in February, withdrew from the federation-to-be, apparently feeling that its aims were too vague or fearing that it would impair their autonomy. At the congress, A.C. Schade van Westrum seized the opportunity to address modernists who continued to argue that a federation for the promotion of religious liberalism already existed in the form of the NPB.⁸² Although the

77 A.H. van der Hoeve, ‘Kerkelijk leven – Federatie’, *De Hervorming* 1919-06 (8 February 1919), 23.

78 A.H. van der Hoeve, ‘Bondsleven – Een misverstand’, *Ibid.* 1919-10 (8 March 1919), 39.

79 A.H. van der Hoeve, ‘Kerkelijk leven – Federatie’, *Ibid.* 1919-06 (8 February 1919), 23.

80 H.G. van Wijngaarden, ‘Kerkelijk leven – Ontwerp-statuten van de federatie van vrije-religieuze groepen en organisaties’, *Ibid.* 1919-12 (22 March 1919), 46-47.

81 H. Westra, ‘Dageraad en Middaghoogte’, *De Stroom* 1.9 (11 February 1922), 2.

82 E.g.: Meiling Amshoff, ‘Ingezonden – Bond of federatie?’, *De Hervorming* 1919-23 (7 June 1919), 98; A.C. Schade van Westrum, ‘Ingezonden – Bond of federatie?’, *Ibid.* 1919-23 (7 June 1919), 98; A.H. van der Hoeve, ‘Verscheidenheden en mededeelingen’, *Ibid.* 1919-23 (7 June 1919), 99.

NPB, he averred, was formally open to anyone, it had never been able to attract large numbers of non-churchgoing individuals, while the religious services held in its branches were no different from those held in church congregations.⁸³ In light of the 'ecclesial turn' analysed in chapter 4, it should be noted here that Schade van Westrum depicted the NPB as an association with strongly 'church-like' features. Those features, as argued in that same chapter, ultimately caused the NPB to lose its central position within the modernist movement. What is more, as suggested in Schade van Westrum's words, they also caused non-modernist 'religious liberals' to reject the NPB as a federative body.⁸⁴

Van Wijngaarden and K.F. Proost hoped that the federation-to-be would accelerate the disintegration of the Dutch Reformed Church, as the current ecclesial situation hindered both liberal Protestantism and orthodoxy from developing.⁸⁵ Their statement met with approval in the orthodox press: if modernists tightened their bonds with adherents of little religions, they would be convinced that it was best for them to leave the Dutch Reformed Church after all.⁸⁶ In vvH circles, however, Van Wijngaarden's and Proost's words caused anxiety: the ideal of the *volkskerk* conflicted with the hope for a disintegration of the Dutch Reformed Church. After the first *Congres van vrij-religieuzen*, the vvH therefore decided not to join the federation-to-be.⁸⁷

The official constitutive meeting of the Federation of Free Religious Groups and Organisations was held in November 1919. Yet, with four potential participants standing aloof – the Old Catholic Church, the Woodbrookers, the *Godsdienstig-Democratische Kring*, and the vvH –, the attempt of the federation to unite the modernist movement, the little religions, and other forms of religious liberalism under the flag of 'free religiosity' had already failed. There was little enthusiasm for the aims of the federation, which were generally seen

83 'Kerknieuws – Congres religieuze federatie', *Algemeen Handelsblad* XCII.29526 (30 May 1919), evening paper, 10.

84 Krijger, 'De Protestantenbond als kerk der toekomst', 22–28.

85 'Kerknieuws – Congres religieuze federatie', *Algemeen Handelsblad* XCII.29526 (30 May 1919), evening paper, 10. See also: A.H. van der Hoeve, 'Bondsleven – Een misverstand', *De Hervorming* 1919-10 (8 March 1910), 39.

86 J.J. Knap, 'Uit het rijke leven – Vrij-religieuzen', *Oude Paden* 1919-27 (6 June 1919), 285–286. See also: 'Uit de pers', *De Waarheidsvriend* x.28 (13 June 1919), 3; x.29 (20 June 1919), 3–4; I. Vogels, 'Mededeelingen – Vreemdsoortig streven naar religieuze eenheid', *Studiën* LI.91 (1919), 489–493; I. Vogels, 'Mededeelingen – Hemelvaartsdag in de Vrije Gemeente te Amsterdam', *Ibid.* LI.92 (1919), 172–177.

87 A.C. Schade van Westrum, 'Kerkelijk leven – De federatie', *De Hervorming* 1919-41 (11 October 1919), 184; [H.G. van Wijngaarden], 'Federatie van vrij-religieuze groepen en organisaties', *Nieuwe Stemmen uit de Vrije Gemeente* II (1919), 120–124.

as 'too vague',⁸⁸ and no consensus as to which groups were included under the term 'free religiosity'.⁸⁹ For instance, the leader of *De Nieuwe Gedachte*, which Van Wijngaarden wanted to involve in the federation, felt that his association did not belong among 'free religious' groups and even denied Spiritists and Theosophists the right to call themselves 'religious' at all.⁹⁰ In 1920, the federation remained inactive. A second *Congres van vrij-religieusen* was organised in the spring of 1921, which was intended to breathe new life into the federation, but actually sealed its fate: at the congress a motion was adopted that urged modernists to tighten their bonds *without* involvement by adherents of little religions.⁹¹ After this congress, the federation faded away.

Next to the Free Religious Federation, another attempt to bring occultists and modernists closer together was made by *De Hervorming*. In 1919, the weekly gave adherents of little religions the opportunity to explain the essence of their faith.⁹² This gesture met with opposition; some questioned whether the modernist movement would receive a positive impulse from an influx of adherents of little religions.⁹³ Hille Ris Lambers called such criticism narrow-minded: science, he felt, had proven that occult phenomena indeed existed, yet modernists closed their eyes to this.⁹⁴ Legitimising the attention paid to oc-

88 A.C. Schade van Westrum, 'Kerkelijk leven – Het federatieplan', *De Hervorming* 1919-20 (17 May 1919), 83; L.N. de Jong, 'Kerkelijk leven – De grondslag der federatie', *Ibid.* 1919-26 (28 June 1919), 112-113, here 112; Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* 111, 101.

89 Where the line was drawn between the unspecified terms 'free religiosity' and 'orthodoxy' was rather arbitrary: as stated in the articles of the federation, groups could only join the federation *by invitation*. See: H.G. van Wijngaarden, 'Kerkelijk leven – Ontwerp-statuten van de federatie van vrije-religieuze groepen en organisaties', *De Hervorming* 1919-12 (22 March 1919), 46-47, here 47.

90 K. Meijer, 'De kerk der toekomst', *Het Nieuwe Leven* v (1919), 1-8. See also: K.F. Proost, 'Uit de tijdschriften', *De Hervorming* 1919-23 (7 June 1919), 98; [H.G. van Wijngaarden], 'Het geloof der toekomst', *Nieuwe Stemmen uit de Vrije Gemeente* 11 (1919), 105-111; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, 'Hoofdartikel – De federatie-gedachte', *De Hervorming* 1921-17 (30 April 1921), 129-130, here 129.

91 W.J. Wegerif, 'Kerkelijk leven – Het tweede federatiecongres', *Ibid.* 1921-19 (14 May 1921), 149-150; 'Godsdienstig leven – 2^e congres van de Federatie van vrij-religieuze groepen en organisaties', *De Telegraaf* XXIX.11188 (7 May 1921), evening paper, 10.

92 'Ingezonden', *De Hervorming* 1919-16 (19 April 1919), 63.

93 A.H. Blaauw, 'Ingezonden', *Ibid.* 1919-16 (19 April 1919), 63; J.W. van der Linden, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Rubini en wat daarmee samenhangt', *Ibid.* 1919-38 (20 September 1919), 166; 1919-39 (27 September 1919), 171-172; M. van de Poel, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing', *Ibid.* 1919-43 (25 October 1919), 191-192.

94 C. Hille Ris Lambers, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Is dat nu modern?', *Ibid.* 1919-43 (25 October 1919), 191.

cultism in *De Hervorming*, the then editorial board member M.C. van Mourik Broekman argued that the little religions should not be rejected in advance; although their epistemology might be unsound, they should be valued for broadening people's outlook on life and hence enriching people's lives, and for seeking to penetrate the deepest levels of reality.⁹⁵ However, due to the criticism mentioned above, the editors of *De Hervorming* felt compelled to backtrack after several months.

As both this failed attempt of *De Hervorming* – an example of the magazine's agency in liberal Protestant circles – and the history of the Free Religious Federation show, enthusiasm for attempts to incorporate the little religions into the modernist movement was meagre. Someone like Eldering evidently had more sympathisers among modernists than someone like Van Wijngaarden. The motion adopted at the second *Congres van vrij-religieusen* shows that the need for closer collaboration was recognised in modernist circles in the early 1920s, but on a small-scale liberal Protestant rather than on a much larger 'free religious' basis. Among modernists, the fear was too great that modernists would get lost in a body as varicoloured and heterogeneous as the Free Religious Federation.⁹⁶ The intention expressed in the motion passed at the 1921 congress was finally carried out in 1923, when the CC came into being.⁹⁷ Afterwards, voices advocating the incorporation of the little religions into the modernist movement were hardly heard anymore. In the 1920s, interest in the little religions declined in society at large,⁹⁸ silencing those voices even further.

95 M.C. van Mourik Broekman, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Opleving van occultisme', *De Hervorming* 1919-39 (27 September 1919), 172-173; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Waarheid in het occultisme', *Ibid.* 1919-40 (4 October 1919), 177-178; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Waarde in het occultisme', *Ibid.* 1919-41 (11 October 1919), 181-182; 1919-42 (18 October 1919), 187-188; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing', *Ibid.* 1919-44 (1 November 1919), 198.

96 W.J. Wegerif, 'Kerkelijk leven – Het tweede federatiecongres', *Ibid.* 1921-19 (14 May 1921), 149-150; 'Godsdienstig leven – 2^e congres van de Federatie van vrij-religieuze groepen en organisaties', *De Telegraaf* XXIX.11188 (7 May 1921), evening paper, 10.

97 In retrospect, the Remonstrant minister W. Mackenzie (1889-1973) attributed the failure of the 'free religious federation' that Van Wijngaarden had initiated to the tepidity of the groups involved and the magnitude of the whole endeavour. See: W. Mackenzie, 'Wat aan de orde is – De federatieve gedachte', *Amsterdamsch Bijblad van De Stroom* VIII.6 (12 January 1929), 1; VIII.8 (26 January 1929), 1; VIII.9 (2 February 1929), 1; VIII.10 (9 February 1929), 1; VIII.11 (16 February 1929), 1; VIII.12 (23 February 1929), 1.

98 F. Dijkema, *Buitenkerkelijke stromingen. Spiritisme, Theosofie, Christian Science, Orde van de Ster in het Oosten* (Amsterdam s.a.), 30-32.

4 Potential Fellow Reform Movements

In the modernist press, attention was paid not only to Spiritism, Theosophy, and other little religions, but also to seemingly 'liberal' tendencies in Roman Catholicism and orthodox Protestantism, in religions other than Christianity, and in the field of education. The reason for this was twofold. First, just like the little religions, these tendencies were viewed as 'signs of the times', as further evidence that new ways to give meaning to life and to make sense of reality were being sought. Second, it was hoped that these tendencies might develop into potential fellow reform movements, allies in modernists' endeavour to counteract confessionalism.

A first expression of a 'liberal' spirit in Catholicism with which modernists were confronted was the so-called 'Old Catholic movement', emerging in the 1870s. Opposing the decision taken at the First Vatican Council in 1870 to turn papal infallibility into a dogma of the Roman Catholic Church, groups of priests and laypeople, primarily in German-speaking Europe, determined to sever their ties with Rome. They sought alliance with the Old Catholic Church of Utrecht, which had already seceded from the Roman Catholic Church in the eighteenth century, and founded new Old Catholic congregations.⁹⁹ In modernist circles, as A. Pierson noted, this development was interpreted as a sign of progress, even as a potential breakthrough of modernist principles in the Catholic world.¹⁰⁰ That expectation seemed realistic at first. After all, those who became Old Catholic did so out of opposition to ultramontanism. They reformed the Catholic liturgy by using vernacular languages instead of Latin in their church services, and separated priesthood and celibacy. Yet, as early as the mid-1870s, it turned out that the Old Catholic movement was failing to meet modernists' expectations: the movement left most doctrines of the Church of Rome intact, remaining merely 'Catholicism without a pope' and lacking a clear vision.¹⁰¹ As a result, modernists' interest in it evaporated after 1880.

99 For a detailed account of the late nineteenth-century Old Catholic movement, see: *The Old Catholic Reform Movements on the Continent 1-x* (London 1889-1890).

100 A. Pierson, 'Roomsche of Germaansche pausen?', *De Hervorming* 1873-36 (4 September 1873), 2-3, here 3. Pierson himself did not regard it as such. See also: 'Buitenland – Spanje', *Ibid.* 1873-01 (2 January 1873), 3-4, here 3; 'De toekomst der katholieke christenheid', *Ibid.* 1873-38 (18 September 1873), 2; J. Hooykaas Herderscheë et al., 'Ingezonden stukken – Bluscht den Geest niet uit', *Ibid.* 1885-10 (7 March 1885), 40.

101 E.g.: A.F. Mackenstien, 'Kroniek', *Ibid.* 1874-19 (7 May 1874), 1-2; 'Buitenland – Zwitserland', *Ibid.* 1874-38 (17 September 1874), 4; 1875-09 (4 March 1875), 4; 'Mededeelingen en berichten', *Ibid.* 1876-02 (13 January 1876), 3-4; [N.C. Balsem], 'Buitenland', *Ibid.* 1877-04 (27 January 1877), 3; 'Buitenland', *Ibid.* 1879-49 (6 December 1879), 195; 1884-44 (1 November 1884), 178; 1890-38 (20 September 1890), 151-152.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, liberal Protestants became aware of new liberal tendencies in Catholic circles, this time not in the form of a secessionist movement, but rather in the form of a group of theologians who had no intention of leaving the Church of Rome. Their theological reform programme was known as 'Catholic modernism' and had the same intention as Protestant modernism: harmonising Christianity, in this case in its Roman Catholic shape, with contemporary science, philosophy and culture.¹⁰² Catholic and Protestant modernism indeed resembled one another.¹⁰³ There was reluctance to be open about this congeniality among Catholic modernists, as they would otherwise call upon themselves the suspicion of being 'crypto-Protestants', but not among liberal Protestants. In *De Hervorming*, particular attention was paid to the opposition met in papal circles by Catholic modernists such as Alfred Loisy (1857-1940) and George Tyrrell (1861-1909). In a series of articles on the latter, published in 1908, H. de Lang applauded Tyrrell's plea to interpret Catholic dogmas more in accordance with historical-critical biblical studies and contemporary scientific knowledge.¹⁰⁴ Yet, it was an illusion to think that the Vatican would go along with this, since in Roman Catholic theology the form and content of dogmas were inseparable. Without realising this, De Lang now used an argument with which orthodox Protestants reinforced their claim that modernists had no right to be part of church life; if Tyrrell could no longer accept official Catholic doctrines, De Lang argued, he should do the only logical thing: leave the Roman Catholic Church – and join the ranks of liberal Protestants, among whom he would have "an honoured place."¹⁰⁵ Later in 1908, De Lang noted that Cardinal Mercier (1851-1926), the then influential archbishop of Mechelen, considered Tyrrell's modernism to be a remnant of his Protestant upbringing.¹⁰⁶

102 O. Weiß, 'Der katholische Modernismus', in: H. Wolf (ed.), *Antimodernismus und Modernismus in der katholischen Kirche. Beiträge zum theologiegeschichtlichen Vorfeld des 11. Vatikanums* (Paderborn etc. 1998), 107-139, here 117-121; E.G.E. van der Wall and L. Kenis, 'Catholic and Protestant Modernisms. A Call for a Comparative Approach', in: L. Kenis and E.G.E. van der Wall (eds.), *Religious Modernism in the Low Countries* (Leuven 2013), 1-22, here 11.

103 *Ibid.*, 20-22. See also: E.G.E. van der Wall, 'Protestants en rooms-katholiek modernisme: een tragische geschiedenis. Aanzetten tot comparatief onderzoek naar aanleiding van Fredrik Pijper, "Het modernisme en andere stroomingen in de katholieke kerk" (1921)', in: Mikkers and Smit (eds.), *Tussen Augustinus en atheïsme*, 63-88.

104 H. de Lang, 'Pater Tyrrell en pater Gerard. Pro en contra', *De Hervorming* 1908-05 (1 February 1908), 33-34, here 33; 1908-06 (8 February 1908), 41-42, here 42.

105 H. de Lang, 'Pater Tyrrell en pater Gerard. Pro en contra', *Ibid.* 1908-07 (15 February 1908), 49-50, here 50.

106 P. Allitt, *Catholic Converts. British and American Intellectuals Turn to Rome* (Ithaca and London 1997), 124.

Although Tyrrell himself, who had indeed been raised a Protestant, rejected this claim, De Lang firmly agreed with Mercier.¹⁰⁷ More than a decade later, the Dominican J.H.H. Sassen (1876-1944) expressed himself in similar terms as Mercier by asserting that Catholic modernism was deeply infected with liberal Protestant theology.¹⁰⁸ These examples illustrate that both anti-modernist Catholics and modernist Protestants were keen to link Catholic modernism to its Protestant namesake, albeit for different reasons: the former to disqualify it as a Protestant 'heresy', a judgement the papacy formalised in 1910, and the latter to prove that their theology was penetrating into Catholicism.

Next to developments that seemed driven by a 'liberal' approach to Catholic theology and ecclesiology, potential manifestations of liberal-mindedness within orthodox Protestantism were also eagerly kept track of in the modernist press. As shown in chapter 3, much effort was made in modernist circles to 'expose' neo-Calvinism, arguably the most influential current within early twentieth-century Dutch Protestantism, as a fundamental break with Calvinist orthodoxy. Particularly in the 1910s, studies appeared in which neo-Calvinism was claimed to be actually imbued with essentially modern or liberal theological principles. At the end of this decade, it even seemed that a 'liberal' movement had begun to emerge in the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, the ecclesial embodiment of neo-Calvinism. In 1917, for example, the neo-Calvinist minister J.B. Netelenbos (1879-1934) acted contrary to several articles of the Belgic Confession, in conflict with which no minister in the Reformed Churches was allowed to act or preach, by conducting a service in a Dutch Reformed congregation and slightly nuancing the literal word of Scripture. He legitimised his actions by claiming that neo-Calvinism left room for interpretations that deviated from, or were even at odds with, the Belgic Confession at some points.¹⁰⁹ Already in 1915, Netelenbos had taken a remarkable step for a neo-Calvinist by joining the editorial board of the short-lived magazine *Voor Hooger Leven* (*For Higher Life*), in which modernists G.A. van den Bergh van Eysinga (1874-1957), A. Klaver (1878-1932), and H.L. Oort (1864-1925) were

107 H. de Lang, 'Buitenland', *De Hervorming* 1908-37 (12 September 1908), 294. See also: E.M. ten Cate, 'Geen tusschenvorm', *Ibid.* 1907-44 (2 November 1907), 347-348.

108 Van der Wall, 'Protestants en rooms-katholiek modernisme', 75.

109 C.J. de Kruijter, 'De erfenis niet geweigerd. Ds. Jan Bernard Netelenbos (1879-1934)', in: D.Th. Kuiper et al. (eds.), *Jaarboek voor de Geschiedenis van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland* vi (1992), 83-129; Kuiper (De Bruijn, De Bruijn and Schutte eds.), *Tussen observatie en participatie*, 131-134.

among his colleagues.¹¹⁰ In *De Hervorming*, he was accordingly praised for being 'liberal-spirited'.¹¹¹ As modernists noticed, Netelenbos was not the only one in neo-Calvinist circles who showed such a liberal spirit: for instance, layman C.M. Buizer (1884-1965) voiced a plea not to identify the 'true church' mentioned in the Belgic Confession exclusively with the Reformed Churches, while the minister H. Jansen (1885-1972) challenged the historicity of the first three chapters of the book of Genesis.¹¹²

To modernists, these events proved that rigid creedalism and dogmatism were more and more experienced as galling bonds even in the Reformed Churches, a development culminating in the mid-1920s with the media-widely controversy surrounding the minister J.G. Geelkerken (1879-1960).¹¹³ While he claimed not to doubt the historicity of Genesis 2 and 3, dealing with the Creation and Fall of man, Geelkerken felt that room should be left in the Reformed Churches to interpret these Scriptural chapters in a more metaphorical way. In 1926, he was called to account at the general synod of the Reformed Churches – in a disciplinary case that was portrayed in the media as revolving around the question of whether the snake in Genesis 2 and 3, due to which Eve and Adam had eaten from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, had spoken in a way 'perceptible to the senses'.¹¹⁴ In *De Hervorming*, the Menonite minister H. Bakels (1871-1952) and M.C. van Mourik Broekman drew a parallel between the Geelkerken controversy and the so-called 'Scopes Trial' of 1925, during which the American schoolteacher John T. Scopes (1900-1970) had been brought to court for violating Tennessee law not to teach the theory

110 'Leestafel – Een nieuw stichtelijk tijdschrift', *De Hervorming* 1915-22 (29 May 1915), 195.

111 'Leestafel – "Dat zij allen één zijn!", *Ibid.* 1917-33 (18 August 1917), 274; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, 'Boekaankondiging – "De grond van ons geloof"', *Ibid.* 1919-31 (2 August 1919), 138.

112 S., 'Kerkelijk leven – Een bezwaarde', *Ibid.* 1918-01 (5 January 1918), 3; S.A., 'Verscheidenheden en mededeelingen – Aanteekeningen', *Ibid.* 1919-19 (10 May 1919), 78-79. See also: H.C. Endedijk, *De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland 1. 1892-1936* (Kampen 1990), 139; M.J. Aalders, 'Hendrik Jansen (1885-1972) en zijn botsing met de kerkenraad van de Gereformeerde Kerk van Eindhoven', *Historisch Tijdschrift GKN* XX (December 2010), 3-22.

113 [H. de Lang], 'Redactioneel – De Gereformeerde Kerken en de Ned.-Hervormde Kerk', *De Hervorming* 1917-24 (16 June 1917), 197-198, here 197; S.A., 'Kerkelijk leven – Aanteekeningen', *Ibid.* 1919-21 (24 May 1919), 87-88; A.C. Schade van Westrum, 'Kerkelijk leven – De Theologische School te Kampen en de cultuur', *Ibid.* 1920-30 (31 July 1920), 118-119; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, 'Hoofdartikel – Ons calvinistisch volksdeel', *Ibid.* 1920-46 (20 November 1920), 181-182, here 182; J.E. Post, 'Eenheid of tegenstelling', *Ibid.* 1925-27 (4 July 1925), 209-210, here 209.

114 G. Harinck (ed.), *De kwestie-Geelkerken. Een terugblik na 75 jaar* (Barneveld 2001); M.J. Aalders, *Heeft de slang gesproken? Het strijdbare leven van dr. J.G. Geelkerken (1879-1960)* (Amsterdam 2013).

of evolution at school. In both cases, animals played a central role: a snake in Geelkerken's case and the proverbial monkey with which Darwin's theory on the origin of species was mocked in the Scopes Trial. In both cases, the protagonists defended the right to interpret the first chapters of Genesis in a more liberal way than was common in their environments.¹¹⁵ Drawing a parallel between the two seemed even more justifiable when the synod of the Reformed Churches gave its verdict in 1926: it condemned Geelkerken's views and hence gave victory to the same kind of biblicism that had triumphed in the Scopes Trial. Because he refused to renounce his views, Geelkerken was forced to leave the Reformed Churches, a fate which Netelenbos and Jansen had already met several years before. Whereas both of the latter had subsequently joined the Dutch Reformed Church, Geelkerken and his sympathisers brought into being a new church denomination, the *Gereformeerde Kerken in Hersteld Verband* (Reformed Churches in Restored Union). This denomination remained rather small – its membership figure grew from 5,500 in 1926 to 7,200 in 1941, meaning that the Reformed Churches were numerically hardly affected by the decision to condemn Geelkerken's views –,¹¹⁶ but that was not what disappointed modernists most about the development of the neo-Calvinist 'movement of youngsters', of which Netelenbos and Geelkerken were two of the most prominent representatives. This movement had seemed promising at first glance,¹¹⁷ but had not developed into a liberal current within neo-Calvinism. Its representatives were not only silenced in the Reformed Churches; they did not become any more liberal-minded afterwards: even the Reformed Churches in Restored Union remained theologically rather orthodox all down the line.¹¹⁸

With regard to 'liberal' tendencies in religions other than Christianity, particular attention was paid in modernist circles to the Brahmo Samaj movement in Hinduism. Founded in 1828, the Brahmo Samaj criticised the rigid caste sys-

115 H. Bakels, 'Dayton – Amsterdam', *De Hervorming* 1925-43 (24 October 1925), 341-342; 1925-47 (21 November 1925), 371; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, 'De kern der kwestie-Geelkerken', *Ibid.* 1926-12 (20 March 1926), 90-92; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, 'Rondom den kern der kwestie-Geelkerken', *Ibid.* 1926-13 (27 March 1926), 99-101.

116 The Reformed Churches in Restored Union merged into the Dutch Reformed Church on 15 May 1946. See: G.F.W. Herngreen, *Een handjevol verkenners. Ontstaan en geschiedenis van het 'H.v.', de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland in Hersteld Verband* (Baarn 1976), 44, 158-163.

117 [W. Mackenzie in:] 'Kerknieuws – De zaak-Geelkerken', *Provinciale Drentsche en Asser Courant* CIII.76 (31 March 1926), 6; J.J. Meyer, 'Dr. Geelkerken veroordeeld', *Het Vaderland* (16 March 1926), evening paper A, 1.

118 E.g.: [B.J. Aris in:] 'Binnenland', *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* LIII.15998 (20 May 1930), 2.

tem along the lines of which social life was organised in India, pressed for educational reforms, and called for women's rights. The adherents of the movement held Jesus of Nazareth in high esteem as a spiritual-ethical mentor and deemed the Gospel to be an important source for principles of life, but also felt that society and religious practices in India could only be reformed from within Hinduism itself.¹¹⁹ This did not prevent modernists from seeing the adherents of the Brahmo Samaj as co-religionists: although not calling themselves Christians, the latter were shown to possess a true 'Protestant' spirit, in the sense described in chapter 3.¹²⁰ In fact, in 1877, J.H. Maronier held the Brahmo Samaj up as an example to the modernist movement. While, as indicated in chapter 2, the NPB was still primarily preoccupied with ecclesial affairs at the time, Maronier brought to his fellow modernists' attention that the Brahmo Samaj was actively manifesting itself in Indian social life – and doing so to good effect: its moral influence in Indian society at large was much bigger than its numerical strength would suggest. Dutch modernists, Maronier argued, could learn from its adherents.¹²¹

A movement advocating a revision of established religious views and practices also manifested itself in Judaism, known as liberal, progressive, or Reform Judaism. At an abstract level, it bore striking resemblances to liberal Protestantism: both originated in the same country, Germany, at around the same time, in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, and both stemmed from a felt need to adapt to modern times. Yet in the nineteenth-century Netherlands, as the historian D. Michman argues, the conditions for liberal Judaism to take root were absent.¹²² First, contrary to their co-religionists in Germany, Dutch Jews were not forced to constantly engage in public debates on their

119 D. Kopf, *The Brahmo Samaj and the Shaping of the Modern Indian Mind* (Princeton 1979), 179. See also: J.N. Wiersma, 'De roeping der modernen', *De Hervorming* 1881-36 (16 September 1881), 145-146, here 146. [This issue is erroneously numbered as '1881-37'.]

120 In the Dutch context, see, e.g.: 'Een bijdrage tot de kennis van een merkwaardig man', *Ibid.* 1876-23 (8 June 1876), 1-2; J.H. Maronier, 'De theïstische kerk in Indië', *Ibid.* 1877-20 (19 May 1877), 1-2; H. de Lang, 'Berichten, enz. – Buitenland', *Ibid.* 1910-39 (24 September 1910), 310; E.G.E. van der Wall, 'India's boodschap aan het Westen', in: C. de Lange and R. Mulder (eds.), *Vijf continenten, vijf eeuwen. Vijf jaar geschiedbeoefening in het Kerk-historisch Gezelschap s.s.s.* (Leiden 2011), 78-90, here 83-84.

121 J.H. Maronier, 'De theïstische kerk in Indië', *De Hervorming* 1877-21 (26 May 1877), 1-2, here 2.

122 There were some Jews who joined the NPB. See: Meyboom, *De Nederlandsche Protestantenbond*, 5. In 1885, at least one Jew was a member of the branch in Lemsterland. In 1908, two Jews were members of the branch in Doetinchem. See: B., 'Vraagbus', *De Hervorming* 1885-10 (7 March 1885), 39; [H. Heetjans in:] *Handelingen NPB* 1908, 38.

position in, and loyalty to, national society. Second, while Dutch Jewish congregations were theologically and ritualistically officially in line with orthodoxy, they tolerated Jews who adhered less strictly to orthodoxy in their midst. And third, in Germany and the United States, it was mainly middle-class Jews who were receptive to the idea of modernising Judaism. In the Netherlands, a Jewish 'bourgeoisie' only began to emerge at the beginning of the twentieth century.¹²³ In view of the central argument of this study, this last observation Michman makes is of particular significance: after all, just as was liberal Judaism, liberal Protestantism was essentially bourgeois. As he made clear in *De Hervorming* in 1903, H. Oort felt that liberal Judaism and liberal Protestantism were not only similar with regard to their socio-economic basis; he argued that the two were basically one and the same – in fact, those Jews who wanted to modernise Judaism had actually become liberal *Christians*. Believing that Jews had to give up everything that was particularly Jewish in order to be liberal, and seeing freedom of conscience, the rejection of legalism, and the notion of free piety that liberal Jews upheld as essentially *Christian* values and ideals, Oort advised liberal-minded Jews to join a (liberal) Christian congregation. There, they would feel more at home than they would ever feel in a synagogue.¹²⁴ In 1906, C.E. Hooykaas suggested that Oort was right in depicting liberal Judaism as a contradiction in terms. Dutch Jews who were religiously liberal-minded, he perceived, had abandoned what was distinctively Jewish. As far as he could see, there were liberal Jews, while a liberal *movement* still did not exist in Dutch Judaism.¹²⁵

However, two years later, this seemed to change. In *De Hervorming*, mention was made of "a movement among Jews in Amsterdam that, as such, bears much resemblance to the one emerging fifty years ago among Protestants and recently among Roman Catholics – nothing more and nothing less than a modernist current." A "young Jewish preacher" led religious services outside of the synagogue, "digging up the original Mosaic principles that are buried under the rubble of legalism and textualism." P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr. welcomed this development in a sermon in the Free Congregation: finally, he asserted, liberal Jews, of whom he believed there were now thousands in Amsterdam, were joining forces.¹²⁶ It would nonetheless take another ten years before an attempt was made to organise them indeed. A liberal Jewish journal, *Het Oude*

¹²³ D. Michman, *Het liberale Jodendom in Nederland 1929-1943* (Amsterdam 1988), 32-34.

¹²⁴ H. Oort, 'Een vrijzinnig Jodendom', *De Hervorming* 1903-19 (9 May 1903), 146; 1903-20 (16 May 1903), 153-154; 1903-21 (23 May 1903), 162.

¹²⁵ C.E. Hooykaas, 'De Joden en de Leidsche Vertaling', *Ibid.* 1906-23 (9 June 1906), 179.

¹²⁶ K., 'Berichten, enz. – Modern Jodendom', *Ibid.* 1908-42 (17 October 1908), 332.

Volk (*The Old People*), was issued as of June 1917, in the circle within which the *Vereeniging van Vrijzinnige Joden in Nederland* (Association of Liberal Jews in the Netherlands) was founded in early 1919. The editors of the *Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad* (*New Jewish Weekly*), the leading and orthodox-minded Jewish opinion magazine in the Netherlands, vehemently attacked the association; they basically agreed with Oort that liberal Judaism implied abandoning all particularities of Judaism. Moreover, they accused the association of sacrificing Judaism to the interests of liberal Protestantism. Their accusation was motivated by the involvement of the association with the Federation of Free Religious Groups and Organisations.¹²⁷ On behalf of the liberal Jews, D.I. Cardozo and I.Th. Cohen van Straaten (1868-1931) attended the meeting Van Wijngaarden convened in February 1919 to discuss the founding of this federation. Cohen van Straaten even helped to draw up the articles of the federation-to-be. In the *Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad*, he and Cardozo were charged with inciting Jews "to assimilate into Christianity." The federation might claim to have an interfaith basis, but it was "pre-eminently a Christian gathering of Old Catholics, Dutch Reformed, Lutherans, Mennonites, Remonstrants, etc."¹²⁸ Its founding was initiated by "a Christian minister" and its inaugural meeting was attended by "members of all Christian church denominations." Even the little religions were essentially Christian, proof of which the editors of the *Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad* found in the glorification of Jesus's name with which the federation was welcomed in *Theosophia*, the monthly magazine of the Dutch Theosophical Association.¹²⁹ How could Jews in all sincerity join a federation with such an overtly Christian character?¹³⁰

Liberal Jews themselves were apparently concerned about this as well; they made joining the federation conditional on its abstaining from every activity intended to amalgamate Christian church denominations. At the constitutive meeting of the federation, held in November 1919, Cohen van Straaten was elected into the general executive board, even though the condition he had laid down was seen as an unacceptable infringement on the freedom of action

127 'Binnenland', *Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad* LIV.41 (7 March 1919), 2; LIV.42 (14 March 1919), 10; 'Het hellend vlak', *Ibid.* LIV.43 (21 March 1919), 1-2; 'Binnenland', *Ibid.* LIV.45 (4 April 1919), 2-3; 'Opruiers', *Ibid.* LIV.48 (25 April 1919), 1.

128 'Binnenland', *Ibid.* LIV.42 (14 March 1919), 10.

129 'Het hellend vlak', *Ibid.* LIV.43 (21 March 1919), 1-2. The article in question is: J.D.R. and W.A.L. Ros-Vrijman, 'Van verre en van nabij', *Theosophia* XXVI.12 (March 1919), 382.

130 G.A. de Ridder reversed this assessment: he doubted whether the growing group of liberal Protestants who stressed attachment to the Christian tradition could feel at ease in a federation in which Jews participated as well. [G.A. de Ridder in:] 'Kerknieuws – De vrijzinnige federatie', *Algemeen Handelsblad* XCII.29486 (19 April 1919), morning paper, 2.

of the federation and therefore rejected.¹³¹ In the *Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad*, he was subsequently asked how on earth Jews could still participate in a federation that no longer even sought to hide its exclusive concern for Christian interests.¹³² This question remained unanswered. At the time, the Association of Liberal Jews was already languishing. After May 1920, when the final issue of *Het Oude Volk* appeared, nothing was heard of the association anymore. At federation meetings and the second Free Religious Congress held in 1921, it was not represented.¹³³ Its quick downfall was undoubtedly caused by differences of opinion on the course that the association should take,¹³⁴ but it might have had to do with its involvement with the Free Religious Federation as well. It is not unreasonable to assume that liberal-minded Jews who might have felt some sympathy for the association feared that the federation endangered their Jewish identity and accordingly refrained from supporting Cohen van Straaten and Cardozo. A new attempt to organise liberal Jews was only made in the 1930s,¹³⁵ when the Free Religious Federation had long been defunct and liberal Protestants were no longer interested in forging an alliance with others.

In modernist circles, there was also some hope that the rise of new pedagogical methods at the beginning of the twentieth century, such as the educational reforms that the Dutch schoolteacher Jan Ligthart (1859-1916), the German esotericist Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), the Italian educationalist Maria Montessori (1870-1952), and the Dutch educationalist Rommert Casimir (1877-1957) proposed, would benefit the advancement of a free development of religious life. These methods were based on the idea that education should not only contribute to children's cognitive development, but also to the development of their inner lives. Just like life reform ideologies such as vegetarianism and teetotalism, these educational reform methods were, though not religious in themselves, often religiously motivated and intended to 'spiritualise' people's lives. As such, they were part of a larger 'humanitarian-idealistic movement', mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, that also included the little religions.

131 'Kerknieuws – Federatie van vrij-religieuze groepen en organisaties', *Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant* LXXVI.318 (15 November 1919), evening paper B, 1-2.

132 'De vrijzinnige Joden', *Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad* LV.26 (21 November 1919), 9.

133 'Kerknieuws – Federatie van vrij-religieuze groepen en organisaties', *Algemeen Handelsblad* XCIV.30117 (17 January 1921), 1; [J. Vigeveno], 'Federatie van vrij-religieuze groepen en organisaties', *De Hervorming* 1921-03 (22 January 1921), 23. At least one Jew continued to be involved with the federation afterwards: José Vigeveno (1891-1943), who was elected as the secretary of the federation in January 1921.

134 L. Schimmel, *Towards a Future of Sincerity and Harmony. Dutch Jews and the Appeal of Reform Judaism* [unpublished thesis, Utrecht University, 2007], 85.

135 Michman, *Het liberale Jodendom in Nederland*, 42-48.

Montessori education provides an interesting case. Its champions, particularly R. Joosten-Chotzen (1899-1983) and A.H.G. Voerman-Verkade (1866-1939), tried to win (other) modernists over to their cause by emphasising that Montessori education did indeed further the free development of religious life. Reform pedagogics in general, they emphasised, were founded on the conviction that absolute freedom with regard to individual self-development is a prerequisite for individuals to live in social harmony and that children are capable of cultivating ethical virtues on their own. They depicted Montessori as a deeply religious woman, whose methods were intended to harmonise the outcomes of the natural sciences with human beings' innate religious 'instinct'.¹³⁶ Although there was a strong sentiment in the modernist movement, dealt with in more detail in chapter 9, that schools were one-sidedly focused on children's cognitive development, reform pedagogics had only limited appeal. The interest their emergence had awakened in modernist circles faded upon closer examination.¹³⁷ H.T. de Graaf, one of the leading experts in the field of psychology of religion, specifically questioned the Roman Catholic frame of reference that Montessori used to describe what education in a religious sense should be. In his eyes, this frame of reference conflicted with the ideal of a truly *free* development of children's inner lives.¹³⁸

5 Atheism and Nondenominationalism

The *fin-de-siècle* era not only witnessed the rise of 'a hundred and one prophets'; it was also the epoch in which atheism, the total denial of belief in a personal God, spread in intellectual circles more than ever before and gradually penetrated even into lower social strata. Slowly, atheism became socially

¹³⁶ R. Joosten-Chotzen, 'Godsdienst en maatschappij – Over Montessori-opvoeding', *De Hervorming* 1920-34 (28 August 1920), 134-135; 1920-35 (4 September 1920), 139; 1920-36 (11 September 1920), 142-143. A.H.G. Voerman-Verkade, 'Godsdienst en maatschappij – Montessori', *Ibid.* 1923-09 (3 March 1923), 66-67. Joosten-Chotzen and Voerman-Verkade were two of the first Montessori teachers in the Netherlands.

¹³⁷ See also: Schuurisma, *Jaren van opgang*, 298-299.

¹³⁸ H.T. de Graaf, 'Godsdienst en maatschappij – Montessori over godsdienstige opvoeding', *De Hervorming* 1924-15 (12 April 1924), 114; H.T. de Graaf, 'Godsdienst en maatschappij – Montessori's godsdienstige opvoeding', *Ibid.* 1924-19 (10 May 1924), 146-147. Other objections are raised in: N. Westendorp Boerma, 'Leestafel – "Een Montessori-moeder" en "Dr. Maria Montessori"', *Ibid.* 1915-49 (4 December 1915), 446-447; G.A. Hoevers, 'Leestafel – "Opvoeder en kind"', *Ibid.* 1916-30 (22 July 1916), 255-256.

more acceptable as a philosophy of life.¹³⁹ In the Netherlands, a freethinkers' magazine called '*De Dageraad*' ('*The Dawn*') was founded in 1855. A freethinkers' association of the same name, established a year later, developed into the main platform of militant atheism – that is to say, as a platform for those who not only denied the existence of God, but also made propaganda for an atheist, materialist outlook on life and vehemently opposed all manifestations of religious life. In their combat against religion, *Dageraad* atheists took a harder line with modernists than they did with orthodox Protestants and Roman Catholics. They regarded the supernaturalist worldview of the latter two groups as intellectually so inferior that it was futile to defend their cause among those groups. With modernists, on the other hand, they had a line of reasoning based on contemporary scientific and scholarly methods and results in common. Yet, while *Dageraad* atheists saw themselves as accepting the consequences to which this line of reasoning inevitably led, namely the acknowledgement that there is no God, they blamed modernists for being half-hearted, for shrinking from accepting this consequence.¹⁴⁰ Modernists, *Dageraad* atheists argued, were accordingly only able to justify their theism by falling back on the subjective category of 'feelings', by making illogical and unsubstantiated mental leaps. Modernist ministers who left the church due to religious doubt, among them Pierson and Busken Huet, confirmed that they were right about modernists fooling themselves. Contrary to those who continued to preach a 'false' compatibility of religion and reason, these ministers were applauded in *Dageraad* circles for being honest enough to admit that God had no place in a modern worldview.¹⁴¹

Given that orthodox Protestants similarly accused modernists of being dishonest by staying in the churches, the latter felt that they were fighting a two-front battle: they were wedged between confessionalism to their right and materialist, atheist freethinking to their left.¹⁴² Although the threat of confessionalism was what caused the NPB to come into being, the atheism of which *De*

139 V.P. Pecora, 'Secularism / Atheism / Agnosticism', in: M. Saler (ed.), *The Fin-de-Siècle World* (London and New York 2015), 537–553, here 537; Van Eijnatten en Van Lieburg, *Nederlandse religiegeschiedenis*, 276.

140 O. Noordenbos, *Het atheïsme in Nederland in de negentiende eeuw. Een kritisch overzicht* (Rotterdam 1931), 31–34, 88.

141 H.U. Meyboom, 'Het doel van het godsdienstonderwijs', *De Hervorming* 1878–22 (1 June 1878), 1–2, here 1; Herderscheë, *De modern-godsdienstige richting in Nederland*, 235–239; Noordenbos, *Het atheïsme in Nederland*, 43, 77–100; Buitenwerf-van der Molen, *God van vooruitgang*, 82–83.

142 Exemplary in this respect is: A.D. Loman, *De modernen als middenpartij* (Amsterdam 1873).

Dageraad was the incarnation was perceived as just as big a threat to a free development of religious life and was therefore counterattacked with just as much zeal in modernist circles.

By claiming that modernists would inevitably become freethinkers if they reasoned logically, *Dageraad* atheists looked at modernists in a similar way to how the latter looked at *evangelischen* and moderate orthodox. This claim provoked modernists to engage in controversies with *De Dageraad*, all the more, as it was grist for the mill of orthodoxy.¹⁴³ As early as 1858, C.P. Tiele, for example, responded to the freethinkers' conviction that modernists were halfway along the path to atheism, by claiming to see a deep rift between modernists and freethinkers.¹⁴⁴ Referring to himself in the third person, Tiele wrote

that no other journal equals *De Dageraad* in its unscientific methods, though the word 'science' is always on its lips. [...] He thinks that *De Dageraad* lacks sincerity and love of truth, as well as fervour stemming from a sincere conviction, which enables us to be invigorated by those with whom we disagree. He is deeply hurt when he reads this magazine, as it insults and scoffs at priests and ministers of all denominations [...], at the Gospel he loves and the Lord he follows. Although he acknowledges that, on rare occasions, a well-written article can be found among the overwhelming amount of drivel and nonsense and mockery of which *De Dageraad* is full, he can [therefore] not make his peace with this magazine.¹⁴⁵

In *De Hervorming*, the freethinkers' argument that modernism lacked a solid basis was repeatedly reversed: reason and science might not in themselves sufficiently verify the existence of God, but they could not decisively *falsify* it either.¹⁴⁶ In fact, modernists believed that freethinkers were not thinking 'freely' at all, as they presumed a priori that God was just a figment of human imagination. Reducing spirit to matter was a dogma to them. Materialism, atheism, and freethinking – in modernist circles, usually no distinction

143 Both in confessionalist and *evangelische* circles, it was common to equate modernism with unbelief. See: Herderscheê, *De modern-godsdienstige richting in Nederland*, 203-235.

144 Noordenbos, *Het atheïsme in Nederland*, 43.

145 C.P. Tiele, 'Een open brief ter beantwoording van een bijzonderen brief', *De Teekenen des Tijds* 1.7 (21 November 1858), 1.

146 E.g.: 'Een geloofsgetuigenis van een dienaar der wetenschap', *De Hervorming* 1874-39 (24 September 1874), 2; 'Godsbegrip en geloof in God', *Ibid.* 1881-51 (24 December 1881), 206; 1881-52 (31 December 1881), 210; G.J.D. Mounier, 'Ingezonden stukken – Het atheïsme en de wiskunde', *Ibid.* 1881-51 (24 December 1881), 207.

was made among the three –, did not provide principles of life, principles on the basis of which individuals could organise their lives.¹⁴⁷ This last argument, dealt with extensively in chapter 6, was rooted in the idea that piety and ethics were closely if not inextricably connected and that a moral life could only genuinely flourish in combination with religious life. Without religion, man was said to be ‘incomplete’, and society was said to lack the incentive necessary for progress.¹⁴⁸ In an 1891 lecture, A. Réville (1826–1906), a French liberal Protestant minister who had served the Walloon Reformed congregation in Rotterdam from 1851 to 1872, exemplarily stated that

all life perishes where religion disappears. [. . .] In due course, no society, no city, no family can do without religion. Moral life languishes without it. To a certain extent, morality and religion are independent of each other. But both relate to each other as a tree to its leaves, flowers, and fruits. Religion is like the sap that enables the tree to develop and to grow. That is why Christianity is the highest manifestation of religious life, as religion and morality grow together within it.¹⁴⁹

Accordingly, combatting atheism was generally seen as a task that the NPB had to fulfil.

Nonetheless, in the 1870s there had seemed to be some ambivalence towards atheism in the circles of the so-called ‘*ethisch-modernen*’, who have been characterised in chapter 2.¹⁵⁰ One of them, A.G. van Hamel, had coined the expression “‘atheistic’ nuance of religion” during the 1874 meeting of modern theologians in Amsterdam, describing his philosophy of life as “religion without metaphysics.”¹⁵¹ Just like *Dageraad* atheists did, Van Hamel not only argued that images of God were figments of human imagination, but also that God did not exist as a real power at all – ‘God’ was nothing more than the objectified projection of man’s moral faculty upon reality. What distinguished Van Hamel from *Dageraad* atheists was, by his own account, the intensity with

147 E.g.: [P. Feenstra, Jr. in:] ‘Nederlandsche Protestantenbond – Oudebildtzijsl’, *De Hervorming* 1881–08 (26 February 1881), 30; P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., ‘Salter over Kuenen’, *Ibid.* 1888–50 (15 December 1888), 198.

148 Exemplary in this respect is: H.G. Hagen, ‘Toespraak’, *Ibid.* 1892–44 (29 October 1892), 173–174, here 174.

149 [J. Réville in:] J.H. Maronier, ‘Een getuigenis’, *Ibid.* 1891–36 (5 September 1891), 143.

150 For the relationship between ethical modernists and atheists, see: Noordenbos, *Het atheïsme in Nederland*, 91–99.

151 A.G. van Hamel, ‘Godsdienst zonder metafysica’, *Theologisch Tijdschrift* VIII (1874), 477–509, here 507.

which he experienced his ethical idealism; he did not see his ethical ideals as relative, but as the highest good in life. As he attached absolute value to the principles of life imbued with the spirit of Jesus, he felt that he still was a Christian and still belonged in the church. Yet in 1879, Van Hamel came to the conclusion that religion could not do without metaphysics after all and that those who could no longer accept a metaphysical worldview should be honest enough to terminate their church membership – which he did himself, permanently stepping down from the pulpit.¹⁵² Another 'ethical modernist', A. Bruining, came to a similar conclusion around the same time, but did not follow him: Bruining came to acknowledge that God is not merely a projection of humanity's need for ethical perfection, but a metaphysical reality.¹⁵³ With Van Hamel leaving the church altogether and Bruining reconsidering his point of view, the 'atheistic nuance' within ethical modernism effectively ended. After a couple of years, ethical modernism as a whole faded into the background.

As said in chapter 3, orthodox Protestants regarded modernists as baptised heathens, equating modernism with unbelief. In 1889, the neo-Calvinist minister W.F.A. Winckel (1852-1945) elaborated on this charge by accusing the NPB of "eagerly accepting atheists as members."¹⁵⁴ Although modernists vehemently objected to being depicted as unbelievers, it was not denied in *De Hervorming* that individuals whom others might see as atheists could indeed obtain NPB membership. No one had the right to pass judgement on someone else's conscience: if an individual who professed not to believe in God could reconcile the aim of the association to advance a free development of religious life with his conscience, he was welcome in the NPB.¹⁵⁵ Even if that would substantiate negative orthodox stereotyping, being firm in principle in the purely

152 A.G. van Hamel, 'Toelichting en antikritiek', *Theologisch Tijdschrift* ix (1875), 238-260; J. Trapman, 'Anton Gerard van Hamel (1842-1907). Van Waals predikant en voorstander van een "atheïstisch christendom" tot de eerste hoogleraar Frans in Nederland', *De Negentiende Eeuw* xxxi.4 (2007), 256-272, here 258-261; J. Trapman, 'Atheistic Christianity. The Case of Anton Gerard van Hamel (1842-1907)', in: Kenis and Van der Wall, *Religious Modernism in the Low Countries*, 131-145, here 144; J. Trapman, 'Twijfel aan het ambt en pijnlijke liefdesveringen. Anton Gerard van Hamel als Waals predikant in Leeuwarden (1868-1872)', in: A.J.C.M. Gabriëls et al. (eds.), *In vriendschap en vertrouwen. Cultuurhistorische essays over confidentialiteit* (Hilversum 2014), 97-107, here 98, 102.

153 Van Diggelen, 'Albertus Bruining', 35-46.

154 W.F.A. Winckel, 'Buitenland – Deutschland', *De Heraut* 579 (27 January 1889), 6.

155 'Van onze geestverwanten in Noord-Duitschland', *De Hervorming* 1889-08 (23 February 1889), 29-30, here 30; M.A.N. Rovers, 'Nog iets over dr. Moritz Schwalb', *Ibid.* 1889-10 (9 March 1889), 38.

hypothetical case of atheists knocking on the doors of the NPB was simply non-negotiable.

Regarding the second half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, no exact figures are available of the number of atheists in the Netherlands. Yet, such figures do exist of the number of Dutch citizens without church membership.¹⁵⁶ Since 1830, a census was taken more or less every ten years. One of the entries recorded in the census was the denominational affiliation of Dutch citizens. These figures also show how many citizens stated that they did not belong to any church denomination at all. The group of atheists was included in the category of the 'unchurched', but did not coincide with it – not every churchless citizen lacked a religious persuasion altogether.¹⁵⁷ Among the unchurched, there were, for example, Spiritists and Theosophists. Those members of the NPB who were not also members of a church denomination – arguably a minority of the NPB membership – were technically 'churchless' as well, but were not included among the unchurched in the ten-year censuses: in spite of its being an association, the NPB was treated as a separate denomination in the censuses. The number of churchless citizens was as low as 295 in 1809, out of a population of 2.2 million. It was still only 12,000 in 1879, out of a population of 4 million. Afterwards, it rapidly increased. In 1889, 66,000 out of 4.5 million citizens called themselves churchless. In 1909, 291,000 out of 5.6 million citizens did not belong to a church denomination. In 1930, the number of churchless citizens was already as high as 1.1 million, out of a population of 7.9 million. Expressed in percentages, the number increased from less than one ten-thousandth in 1809 to 0.3 in 1879 and ultimately to 14.3 in 1930.¹⁵⁸ In his 1933 dissertation on nondenominationalism, referred to in the introductory chapter, J.P. Kruijt lists several factors that contributed to this increase, such as changes in economic production, the spread of natural scientific knowledge, urbanisation, a growing role of the state in social life at the expense of the churches, and psychological differences between inhabitants of various geographical areas.¹⁵⁹

156 Here, the terms 'nondenominational', 'churchless', and 'unchurched' are used to refer to the state of being without church membership. The term 'secular' is avoided, because it has several meanings and could therefore cause confusion. Cf.: K.M.T.C. Dobbelaere, 'Secularization', in: W.H. Swatos, Jr. et al. (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Religion and Society* (Walnut Creek etc. 1998), 452-456.

157 Cf.: H. McLeod, 'Introduction', in: H. McLeod and W. Ustorf (eds.), *The Decline of Christendom in Western Europe, 1750-2000* (Cambridge 2003), 1-26, here 13.

158 Knippenberg, *De religieuze kaart van Nederland*, 276.

159 Kruijt, *De onkerkelijkheid in Nederland*; H. Faber et al., *Ontkerkelijking en buitenkerkelijkheid in Nederland* (Assen 1970); Knippenberg, *De religieuze kaart van Nederland*, 227-229; M. te Grotenhuis, *Ontkerkelijking. Oorzaken en gevolgen* (Nijmegen 1999).

One of the most important factors that Kruijt holds responsible for the growth of the unchurched was social dissatisfaction and the rise of socialism resulting from this. As chapter 7 shows, the early socialist labour movement, which took shape in the Netherlands around 1880, was imbued with an atheist, or at least a strongly anti-religious, spirit.¹⁶⁰ Its first real leader was a former modernist minister: F. Domela Nieuwenhuis. His resignation as a minister, in 1879, was a decisive break with church life and, although he continued to appreciate the person of Jesus of Nazareth, in whom he recognised a radical social critic and social reformer, even an abandonment of Christianity altogether. From then on, instead of preaching the Gospel, he preached a socialist society in which no man would possess more than another. Active in *Dageraad* circles in the 1880s, Domela Nieuwenhuis interspersed his socialist discourse with anti-religious rhetoric. By so doing, Kruijt argues, he stimulated his working-class audience to walk out of the churches as well.¹⁶¹ This is not to say that every socialist was a lapsed churchgoer. Moreover, as noted in chapter 7, anti-religious sentiments became weaker within the socialist labour movement after 1900. Nonetheless, a strong correlation between socialism and nondenominationalism cannot be denied. In politically socialist bulwarks, such as the Frisian countryside and the urban and industrialised areas in the Western Netherlands, the number of unchurched citizens was relatively higher than in other parts of the country.¹⁶²

In modernist circles, the interpretations given to the growth of nondenominationalism varied. One interpretation was that it was a direct consequence of the ongoing factional quarrels in church life: a growing number of individuals became tired of those quarrels and left the churches in frustration.¹⁶³ Some claimed that orthodoxy was solely responsible for the growing number of lapsed churchgoers. In so doing, they reversed the orthodox argument that the modernist message of a Christianity without Christ as a mediator,

160 J.P. Kruijt, 'De bevolking der Zaanstreek', *Mensch en Maatschappij* IV (1928), 306-322, here 314-315; Staverman, *Volk in Friesland buiten de kerk*, 185-199; H. de Vos, *Geschiedenis van het socialisme in Nederland in het kader van zijn tijd* I (Baarn 1976), 17.

161 Kruijt, *De onkerkelijkheid in Nederland*, 178-179.

162 H. Knippenberg and B.C. de Pater, *De eenwording van Nederland. Schaalvergroting en integratie sinds 1800* (Nijmegen 1988), 194-198; H. Knippenberg and B.C. de Pater, 'Brandpunt van macht en modernisering? De positie van Holland binnen Nederland na 1800', in: De Nijs and Beukers (eds.), *Geschiedenis van Holland* IIIb, 547-619, here 609.

163 E.g.: F. Dijkema, 'De volkstelling', *De Hervorming* 1911-48 (2 December 1911), 381-382, here 382; A.C. Schade van Westrum, 'Hoofdartikel – De uitslag der volkstelling', *Ibid.* 1922-38 (23 September 1922), 297-298, here 298; A.E.F. Junod, 'Kerkelijk leven – Kerkelijke en onkerkelijke cijfers', *Ibid.* 1923-14 (7 April 1923), 107-108, here 108.

and modernists' view on the Bible as an ahistorical book, fostered apostasy – arguing instead that individuals with an orthodox background never learned to differentiate between the form and content of faith, and consequently lost their faith altogether when they could no longer accept the form.¹⁶⁴ Others, however, felt that modernists contributed most to people's abandonment of the church and were even pleased with this. In their eyes, it was a sign that the modernist movement was successful. The modernist movement wanted individuals to acquire truly *personal* convictions about life. Confessions of faith prescribing specific conceptions of God therefore had to be gotten rid of, as did also 'perverse' incentives to be a church member, such as social pressure or financial benefit.¹⁶⁵ Apparently, a small number of modernists felt that the 'purification process' after which the modernist movement aspired was beginning to pay off: those who had so far stayed in church for reasons other than purely religious ones were giving up their church membership in larger numbers.¹⁶⁶ Sociologists would later describe the growth of nondenominationalism as such a 'purification process' as well.¹⁶⁷ Yet, they emphasised that modernism at most accelerated and intensified this process; it only contributed to nondenominationalism in combination with other factors. For example, individuals who only stayed in church to profit from diaconal aid would have not been stimulated to give up their church membership by modernist preaching had the government not effectively taken over social welfare activities from the churches.¹⁶⁸

A more common reaction in modernist circles to the increase in people leaving the church was not to explain it, but to downplay it.¹⁶⁹ One way to do this was by accentuating that the phenomenon was not confined to the modernist movement. Some modernists contended that orthodoxy was

164 E.g.: G. Horreüs de Haas, *Geloof en leven* (Amsterdam 1925), 41–44.

165 E.g.: [J.L. van Tricht], 'Berichten en mededeelingen – De openstelling der Christelijke gemeente voor nieuwe leden', *De Hervorming* 1916–18 (29 April 1916), 147.

166 H. Oort, 'Hoofdartikelen – De waarde van het geloof in God', *Ibid.* 1917–11 (17 March 1917), 86–87; H. Oort, *Het Christendom dat komt* (Maassluis 1918), 23.

167 Kruijt, *De onkerkelijkheid in Nederland*, 325–327; Verberne, *Geschiedenis van Nederland* VIII, 91; Smits, *Kerk en stad*, 101; L.J. van der Kam, *Hoe is de stand bij de vrijzinnigen?* (Utrecht s.a.), 6.

168 Kruijt, *De onkerkelijkheid in Nederland*, 247–249, 310; H. Noordegraaf, 'Did Modernism Promote Unbelief?', in: Kenis and Van der Wall (eds.), *Religious Modernism in the Low Countries*, 147–158, here 154.

169 J.M. van Veen (1905–2000), at the time a theological candidate, regretfully noticed that the issue of nondenominationalism was either not reflected upon fundamentally enough or reflected upon from a perspective borrowed from orthodoxy in modernist circles as early as 1933. See: J.M. van Veen, *Kerk en oecumenische beweging* (Utrecht 1933), 5.

also affected by the increase in people abandoning the church, and perhaps even more so, since it was less receptive to modern culture and consequently stood much further away from churchless people.¹⁷⁰ Another way to downplay the growth of nondenominationalism was by contrasting it with modernist congregations and NPB branches that flourished,¹⁷¹ or by focusing on signs, small as they might be, that seemed to indicate a religious 'revival'.¹⁷² The growing interest in little religions in the early twentieth century, for example, could be interpreted as a sign that more and more people were seeking God.¹⁷³ Others maintained that many who left the churches did so due to religious indifference rather than conscious anti-religious motivations. In any case, it was acknowledged in modernist circles that lapsed churchgoers were not necessarily irreligious. What is more, as some modernists stressed, claiming to be irreligious and actually being irreligious were not the same thing. P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., H.U. Meyboom, and the Lutheran minister J.A. Helper Sesbrugger (1851-1906) argued that those who claimed to have no religious faith yet showed themselves to be highly conscientious and who helped others in becoming high-principled *personalities* were not unbelievers at all.¹⁷⁴ Such

170 E.g.: A.C. Schade van Westrum, 'Hoofdartikel – De uitslag der volkstelling', *De Hervorming* 1922-38 (23 September 1922), 297-298, here 298; W.R.M. Noordhoff, *Vrijzinnig protestantisme en onkerkelijkheid. Een samenvatting van de beschouwingen en besprekingen van het Congres ter bestudeering van het vraagstuk der onkerkelijkheid in November 1936 door de Centrale Commissie voor het Vrijzinnig Protestantisme gehouden* (Utrecht 1937), 13-17.

171 A.H. van der Hoeve, 'Bondsleven – Het staat er nog zoo slecht niet voor. . .', *De Hervorming* 1919-37 (13 September 1919), 163; A.H. van der Hoeve, 'Hoofdartikel – Het een en ander uit het jongste verleden van den bond', *Ibid.* 1921-37 (17 September 1921), 290; H.T. de Graaf, 'Hoofdartikel – De algemeene vergadering', *Ibid.* 1921-43 (29 October 1921), 337-338, here 337.

172 E.g.: [P. van der Meulen in:] 'Berichten, enz. – De algemeene vergadering', *Ibid.* 1909-47 (20 November 1909), 371-373, here 372; 'Redactioneel – Het kerkbezoek', *Ibid.* 1914-22 (30 May 1914), 189-190, here 190; [N.A. Bruining], 'Hoofdartikel – Uit de openingsrede van mej.dr. N.A. Bruining, van de moderne theologenvergadering', *Ibid.* 1923-16 (21 April 1923), 121-123, here 122; N. van der Kolff, 'Kerkelijk leven – De jongere intellectueelen en de bestaande godsdienstige organisaties', *Ibid.* 1923-40 (6 October 1923), 314-316, here 315. Others, such as F.E. van Santen, disagreed. E.g.: F.E. van Santen, 'Redactioneel – Studie in plaats van godsdienst?', *Ibid.* 1916-43 (21 October 1916), 372; F.E. van Santen, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – De kwijnende godsdienst', *Ibid.* 1918-22 (1 June 1918), 85-86.

173 Heering, however, believed that the number of individuals with an interest in liberal Christianity among the religious unchurched was negligible. See: G.J. Heering, 'Ingezonden stukken – Is het waar?', *Ibid.* 1907-45 (9 November 1907), 358-359, here 359.

174 [P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr. in:] 'Elfde algemeene vergadering van den Nederlandschen Protestantenvond', *Ibid.* 1881-45 (12 November 1881), 181-183, here 182; [P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr. in:] 'Ingezonden stukken – Natuurlijke godsdienst', *Ibid.* 1883-18 (5 May 1883), 72; J.A. Helper Sesbrugger, 'Godsdienstloos en toch. . .?', *Ibid.* 1889-50 (14 December 1889), 200; H.U. Meyboom, "'Godsdienstloos als wij zijn'", *Ibid.* 1889-51 (21 December 1889), 204.

people were one with modernists in spirit, even though they did not count themselves among modernists. Without recognising it themselves, they thus belonged to the modernist movement.¹⁷⁵

Yet, even though it was denied that the growth of nondenominationalism coincided with the increase of irreligion in Dutch society, the circumstance that people left the churches while remaining religious came more and more to be seen as problematic in modernist circles after 1900. As a result of the 'ecclesial turn', the aim of the modernist movement to advance a free development of religious life both within and outside of the churches narrowed down to the intention to lead religious citizens without church membership (back) into church life.¹⁷⁶ In contrast to the earliest decades of the modernist movement, when voices disparaging the institution of the church had predominated, voices stressing the importance and even the indispensability of churchgoing now gained prevalence. As said in chapter 4, there continued to be modernists who attached little value to the institution of the church, but in general, the opinion that religious life could only thrive to the full in an ecclesial shape came to prevail.¹⁷⁷

Some got the impression that churchgoing modernists more and more looked down upon religious people with no church membership. Without questioning church life as such, they felt that modernists should try to make church life more attractive to the unchurched.¹⁷⁸ Others vehemently opposed this. In 1914, for example, the Mennonite minister F. Dijkema (1877-1944) urged modernist ministers to never adjust their preaching to the wishes of those who

175 This claim was still being heard in the twentieth century. See, e.g.: J.W. van der Linden, 'Geloof en ongeloof', *De Hervorming* 1912-16 (20 April 1912), 121-122, here 121; V.H., 'Hoofd-artikelen – In de verte', *Ibid.* 1916-25 (17 June 1916), 209.

176 F.E. van Santen argued that if the religious 'revival' referred to above was not channelled to the churches, it would soon disappear. See: F.E. van Santen, 'Kerkelijk leven', *Ibid.* 1919-37 (13 September 1919), 164.

177 E.g.: F. Dijkema, 'De groote stad – Een afscheid', *Amsterdamsch Bijblad van De Stroom* VIII.21 (27 April 1929), 1; Noordhoff, *Vrijzinnig protestantisme en onkerkelijkheid*, 6-7, 13. Exemplary in this respect is what layman J. Ellerbroek (1894-1964) wrote in 1930: "We can easily fool ourselves into thinking that we can cultivate our religious life just as well outside as inside the church. [...] Let us thoroughly consider whether this line of reasoning does not stem from a certain laziness." Quoted from: Ellerbroek, *Kerk en kerkgaan* XVIII, 9-10. That same year, H.T. de Graaf even stated that, next to the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, church attendance itself was more and more felt to be a sacrament in liberal Protestant circles. See: H.T. de Graaf, *Kerk en kerkgaan* XIX. *Theologie en kerk* (Huis ter Heide 1930), 5.

178 E.g.: A.C. Schade van Westrum, 'Kerkelijk leven – De vraag van den heer Taal', *De Hervorming* 1918-12 (23 March 1918), 47; A.C. Schade van Westrum, 'Kerkelijk leven – Het federatieplan', *Ibid.* 1919-20 (17 May 1919), 83.

did not belong to their congregations.¹⁷⁹ Five years later, J.J. Bleeker vented his gall on what he saw as a 'genuflection' towards the unchurched: "for decades, it was generally thought that no sincere religious life could exist outside the churches. [...] Recently, however, the previously denigrated religiously-minded unchurched are enthroned." In Bleeker's opinion, the religiosity of these people should not be valued too highly. He therefore advised the modernist movement not to give them too much attention.¹⁸⁰ G. Horreüs de Haas fully agreed: "in my eyes," he stated, "all attempts to create and organise a religious gathering with new rituals and forms are vain. We should try rather to be uplifted by the existing forms."¹⁸¹ These modernists did not think that church life should be reformed so as to interest the unchurched in joining it, but, on the contrary, the unchurched needed to be persuaded of the high religious value of existing church practices. Accordingly, those practices were not held responsible for the growing number of lapsed churchgoers; rather, lapsed churchgoers themselves were: they did not recognise the high value of those practices, a failure for which they were themselves to blame. The most important question was not *why* people left the churches, but rather *how* they could be convinced to return.

In the NPB, the intensified denominational awareness that was part of the 'ecclesial turn' caused tensions between the majority that combined NPB membership with church membership and the minority that did not.¹⁸² Yet, notwithstanding these tensions, the difference between NPB members with and without church membership was rather artificial. True, both groups had different interests: church-minded NPB members did not want the NPB to weaken denominational church life, while unchurched NPB members did not want the NPB to efface itself so as not to hinder liberal Reformed, liberal Lutheran, Mennonite, and Remonstrant congregations from developing. But the latter's devotional preferences were no different from the former's: particularly when the 'ecclesial turn' set in, there was basically no difference between attending a religious service in an NPB branch or in a modernist church congregation. The unchurched in the NPB might have objections against the *in-*

179 F. Dijkema, 'Verandering in onze godsdienstprediking?', *De Hervorming* 1914-09 (28 February 1914), 71. See also: A.C. Schade van Westrum, 'Kerkelijk leven – De preek', *Ibid.* 1919-01 (4 January 1919), 3.

180 J.J. Bleeker, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Succes of geloof?', *Ibid.* 1919-24 (14 June 1919), 101-102, here 102.

181 G. Horreüs de Haas, 'Kerkelijk leven – De toekomst van de Ned. Herv. Kerk', *Ibid.* 1920-42 (23 October 1920), 166-167, here 167.

182 H.T. de Graaf, 'Hoofdartikel – Bondslid en kerklid', *Ibid.* 1924-02 (12 January 1924), 10-11, here 10.

stitution of the church, but they were obviously not against church *practices* – otherwise, they would have left the NPB when branches became more church-like. For churchless yet religious individuals who did not appreciate church practices, however, it now became less attractive to join the NPB. In the early twentieth century, the association therefore found itself facing a difficult predicament. The ‘ecclesial turn’ caused the NPB to be seen as in competition with church-minded liberal Reformed, liberal Lutheran, Mennonite, and Remonstrant modernists, due to this causing the NPB to lose its central position in the modernist movement. The ‘ecclesial turn’ also caused the NPB to become more church-like itself. This limited its appeal among the unchurched in general, the very people they wanted to recruit as new members to compensate for the loss of its central position within the modernist movement.¹⁸³

6 The Modernist Movement and Other Alternatives to Orthodoxy: An Evaluation

At the beginning of this chapter, H.G. van Wijngaarden was quoted looking back on the rather unfortunate history of the Federation of Free Religious Groups and Organisations that he had founded in 1919. The time had seemed ripe for bringing such a federation into being. Due to a growing dissatisfaction with a purely scientific, materialistic worldview on the one hand and a steadily growing number of people who did not find spiritual satisfaction in the churches on the other, the interest in relatively new alternatives to materialism and conventional church life such as Spiritism and Theosophy increased in the *fin-de-siècle* era, also in modernist circles. Moreover, other alternatives emerged during and after the First World War. *De Nieuwe Gedachte* was one of many religious-philosophical-humanistic movements that advocated a revitalisation of European civilisation and culture through spiritual regeneration: feeling that the war had not only caused physical damage, but also spiritual wounds, which existing forms of Christianity could not cure, these movements

183 E.g.: A.H. van der Hoeve, ‘Bondsleven – Als het getij verloopt, moet men de bakens verzetten’, *De Hervorming* 1918-01 (5 January 1918), 3; A.H. van der Hoeve, ‘Bondsleven – Eenige beschouwingen’, *Ibid.* 1918-38 (21 September 1918), 151; [L. Knappert], ‘Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing’, *Ibid.* 1918-44 (2 November 1918), 173-175, here 175; A.H. van der Hoeve, ‘Bondsleven – De buitenkerkelijken’, *Ibid.* 1920-25 (26 June 1920), 99; 1920-26 (3 July 1920), 103; R. Miedema, ‘Bondsleven’, *Ibid.* 1920-27 (10 July 1920), 107; A.H. van der Hoeve, ‘Bondsleven – De eerste reisbrief’, *Ibid.* 1922-26 (1 July 1922), 203-205, here 204; [A.E.F. Junod], ‘Leiding en beleid in den bond’, *Ibid.* 1926-48 (27 November 1926), 377-379, here 378.

proclaimed that the age to come was in need of a new kind of religion, based on human existence itself and hence having universal significance.¹⁸⁴ Particularly in the theologically 'left wing' of the modernist movement, this message fell on fertile soil. It was no coincidence that the Free Congregation in Amsterdam, which was more or less the institutional embodiment of the modernist left wing, was the nerve centre of the Free Religious Federation: its then pastor Van Wijngaarden was the key figure within the federation and its building was the venue for federation meetings.

Van Wijngaarden and other liberal Protestants with an interest in Spiritism, Theosophy, *De Nieuwe Gedachte*, and similar 'little religions' believed that the modernist movement would benefit from tightening its bonds with the adherents of these little religions, who, just like modernist themselves, for the most part belonged to the bourgeois classes. They felt that elements of little religions complemented modernism, giving what modernism itself was unable to provide, such as certainty about eternal life and a satisfactory synthesis of science and spiritual life, and hence making modernism more appealing. In their eyes, little religions were thus a potentially positive influence on liberal Protestantism. In addition, if the modernist movement got closer to the adherents of little religions, it would, in turn, be able to exert more influence on religious life that was not confined to church life, and so especially in the interest of the NPB. Now that the exclusively Reformed vvh had emerged parallel to the NPB, and Remonstrants, Mennonites, and liberal Lutherans had also begun to accentuate their denominational identity, a stronger focus on nondenominational religious life could give the NPB, which, as pointed out in chapter 2, went through a severe crisis at the time, a new *raison d'être*. When Van Wijngaarden presented his plan to bring liberal Protestants and the adherents of little religions closer together, modernists like A.H. van der Hoeve and J.A. Beijerman therefore argued that this plan could indeed be carried out within the framework of the NPB.¹⁸⁵

These incentives to tighten and formalise the bonds between liberal Protestants and the adherents of little religions were only in the interest of the former. Yet the main, and official, motive behind the founding of the Free Religious Federation was also in the interest of the latter. As Van Wijngaarden and his sympathisers repeatedly stressed, both groups suffered from the ostentatious display of power on the part of 'confessionalist' Christians, whether

184 M. Brolsma, "Het humanitaire moment". *Nederlandse intellectuelen, de Eerste Wereldoorlog en het verlangen naar een regeneratie van de Europese cultuur* (Hilversum 2016), 11-18.

185 'Kerknieuws – Vergadering inzake kerk-organisatie', *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* LXXVI.37 (7 February 1919), evening paper B, 2.

Roman Catholics or orthodox, particularly neo-Calvinist, Protestants. Both groups were ignored or simply overlooked. On their own, they did not have enough strength to do something about this. Accordingly, the aim of the federation to bring liberal Protestants and adherents of little religions closer together was ultimately meant to increase the visibility of 'free' – that is, non-confessionalist – religiosity in society as a counterbalance to the omnipresence of Roman Catholicism and neo-Calvinism, and to challenge Roman Catholics' and neo-Calvinists' social and political dominance.¹⁸⁶ The founding of the Free Religious Federation thus stemmed from a feeling of marginalisation and the need to counteract this marginalisation.

However, the federation met with little enthusiasm in modernist circles, and not merely because of the perceived 'vagueness' of the steps it wanted to take to realise its aim, as Lindeboom notes. The little religions were far too controversial to generate enough support among modernists for forging a strong alliance with their adherents. Only a minority believed that a fruitful cross-pollination between them and liberal Protestantism was possible; in *De Hervorming*, little religions were often portrayed as doctrinal, supernaturalist, autosuggestive, unsubstantiated, cultic, and sometimes as morally dubious. For this reason, Van der Hoeve and Beijerman's plea not to found a new body, but rather to turn the NPB into Van Wijngaarden's proposed federation of free religious groups and organisations was not applauded: although the NPB formally welcomed anyone who supported a free development of religious life, pro-actively incorporating adherents of little religions within its framework would undoubtedly cause too much protest (even setting aside the question of whether those adherents would have been willing to join the NPB in the first place). In fact, Van Wijngaarden's whole endeavour was at odds with current trends in the modernist movement: the 'ecclesial turn' and the related rise of right-wing modernism accentuated the Christian roots of the

186 E.g.: A.H. van der Hoeve, 'Kerkelijk leven – Federatie', *De Hervorming* 1919-06 (8 February 1919), 23; H.G. van Wijngaarden, 'Kerkelijk leven – Ontwerp-statuten van de federatie van vrije-religieuze groepen en organisaties', *Ibid.* 1919-12 (22 March 1919), 46-47; 'Kerkelijk leven – Wat wij willen met de Federatie van vrij-religieuze groepen en organisaties', *Ibid.* 1919-21 (24 May 1919), 87; [H.G. van Wijngaarden in:] 'Kerknieuws – Vergadering inzake kerk-organisatie', *Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant* LXXVI.37 (7 February 1919), evening paper B, 2; [H.G. van Wijngaarden in:] 'Kerknieuws – Federatie vrij-religieuze groepen en organisaties', *Algemeen Handelsblad* XCII.29443 (7 March 1919), morning paper, 7; [A.C. Schade van Westrum in:] 'Kerknieuws – Federatie van vrij-religieuzen', *Ibid.* XCII.29516 (20 May 1919), morning paper, 6; [G.J. Salm in:] 'Kerknieuws – Congres van de Federatie van vrij-religieuze groepen en organisaties', *Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant* LXXVI.148 (30 May 1919), evening paper D, 2.

modernist movement, thereby causing orthodox sounding language as well as the institution of the church and church practices to be more appreciated than was the case in its earliest development phase. The modernist movement as a whole was, so to speak, moving 'to the right', in the direction of Christian orthodoxy, while the federation tried to steer it 'to the left', in a direction that would lead it further away from its Christian and ecclesial patrimony.

Van Wijngaarden and his sympathisers must have seen the Free Religious Federation as a means to counteract the 'ecclesial turn' and to counterbalance the growing influence of right-wing modernism. Lindeboom suggests that contemporary opponents of the federation indeed suspected them of this; after all, he writes, the federation was doomed to fail from the start, as "many felt that the persons who initially supported it did not sufficiently vouch for a favourable outcome of the endeavour."¹⁸⁷ This sentence becomes less cryptic if one takes into account the fact that all of the strongest liberal Protestant supporters of the federation belonged to the theologically left wing of the modernist movement. The right-wing modernist majority that had started to take shape apparently feared that the initiators of the federation aimed at a destruction of denominational life – a fear that was not unjustified, since Van Wijngaarden indeed hoped that the federation would set in motion a division of the existing churches into a conservative and a liberal block, and thereby pave the way for a new religious community in which all liberals – modernists *and* the adherents of little religions – would be united.¹⁸⁸ Only a tiny minority (still) cherished this ideal, however. The federation therefore quickly perished, but would be revived later in the 1920s on a smaller scale, now only encompassing liberal Protestant groups and organisations, in the form of the CC.

The liberal Protestant press paid much attention to the rise of little religions, but, as the fiasco of the Free Religious Federation made clear, few modernists considered this phenomenon to be a positive development. It also took a keen interest in movements that manifested themselves within Catholicism and orthodox Protestantism, and which, without breaking with the Catholic and orthodox Protestant traditions altogether, tried to reform those traditions. Most of these movements were initially greeted as potential allies in the modernists' pursuit of a free development of religious life. However, reports about them in the liberal Protestant press became less optimistic over time, as modernists felt that none of them realised their potential. For instance, the second 'Old Catholic' wave starting in the 1870s – the first had been the emergence

187 Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III, 102.

188 'Kerknieuws – Vergadering inzake kerk-organisatie', *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* LXXVI.37 (7 February 1919), evening paper B, 2.

of a separate Old Catholic Church alongside the Roman Catholic Church, following the Jansenist controversy, in the Netherlands in the early eighteenth century¹⁸⁹ – seemed a promising reform movement in modernist eyes at first, as it arose out of rebellion against the dogma of papal infallibility. Yet, it became quickly apparent that it retained more of the Catholic system of dogmas than liberal Protestants desired. Early twentieth-century Catholic modernism was not even given the opportunity to realise its potential, as Rome heavily suppressed it. To liberal Protestants' equal disappointment, modest calls for modest reform in the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands did not develop into a theologically more liberal neo-Calvinist faction, but only led to ministers being dismissed and to the formation of a tiny new denomination that was still quite orthodox, the Reformed Churches in Restored Union. In religions other than Christianity, a liberal current of any significance had only developed in Hinduism, the Brahmo Samaj. Finally, modernists noted with disappointment that, upon closer consideration, pedagogical reform movements that at first glance seemed to share their ideal of a free development of religious life, most notably Montessori pedagogics, interpreted the notion of 'freedom' in a different way than they did. In counterattacking confessionism and materialism, modernists thus continued to be left to their own devices: they ultimately rejected adherents of little religions as allies, while other potential allies with a Catholic, orthodox Protestant, non-Christian, or religion-based pedagogical background did not prove satisfactory in the long run. As chapter 9 shows, modernists therefore decided to close their own ranks more firmly in the 1920s.

Modernists were not only confronted with developments in religious life in general, but also with trends affecting church life in particular. The growing influence of orthodoxy, dealt with in the previous chapters, was one of these trends. In addition, the numbers of so-called *randkerkelijken*, people who were members of a particular church denomination without actively participating in church life, and *buitenkerkelijken*, people without church membership at all, gradually increased. In some modernist press articles, orthodoxy and its 'bigotry' were blamed for this, while in others, modernists were urged to first and foremost acknowledge their own responsibility for this. Not all lapsed churchgoers lacked religious beliefs altogether – the adherents of little religions, for example –, but some of them did deny the existence of God or the realm of the spirit. These atheists, the most militant of whom were grouped around the freethinkers' association *De Dageraad*, were assailed in the modernist press for their materialistic worldview, for reducing spirit to matter and

189 J.M. Neale, *A History of the So-Called Jansenist Church of Holland* (New York [1858] 2007).

attacking religious life. Moreover, as the next chapter explains, modernists closely linked belief in God to ethics, and accordingly saw atheism as a threat to public morals. Yet they tended to believe that the number of confirmed unbelievers among the *buitenkerkelijken* was actually marginal.

Although modernists acknowledged that religious life and church life did not coincide, being religious outside of a church context came more and more to be seen as problematic in modernist circles. While religious life that was not confined to the churches had been regarded as something worth promoting in the first decades of the modernist movement, the 'ecclesial turn' led church life to be seen as the pinnacle of religious life. As the Dutch Reformed minister I.M.J. Hoog (1858-1928) noted in 1918, liberal Protestants increasingly considered their faith to be 'superior' to that of religious people who did not attend church, believing that religious life could not fully thrive if it was not embedded in an ecclesial setting.¹⁹⁰ In consequence, rather than enabling religious life to develop and flourish outside of the churches, leading lapsed churchgoers, whether they self-identified as irreligious or not, (back) to church life was acknowledged as the goal for which the modernist movement had to strive. Instead of building a new kind of community of faith, modernists held that the churchless should be convinced of the significance of church attendance, seeking in so doing to strengthen their own position vis-à-vis orthodoxy in church life.

190 [I.M.J. Hoog in:] A.C. Schade van Westrum, 'Kerkelijk leven – De vraag van den heer Taal', *De Hervorming* 1918-12 (23 March 1918), 47. Mikkers makes a similar remark in reference to the 1937 brochure *Vrijzinnig protestantisme en onkerkelijkheid*. See: A.A.I.M. Mikkers, *Religiestress. Hoe je te bevrijden van deze eigentijdse kwelgeest* (Zoetermeer 2012), 35.

PART 3

Liberal Protestant Discourse



A Spiritual Aristocracy of Tutors

1 Stained-Glass Windows Exemplifying Liberal Protestant Discourse

On 24 May 1879, one and a half years after the founding of the Free Congregation in Amsterdam, the first pile of the congregation's new building was driven into the ground. The architect G.B. Salm (1831-1897) designed a place of worship in an 'eclectic' style, combining early Christian and Romanesque elements, thereby giving expression to the religious 'eclecticism' of the Free Congregation. The building, which was explicitly called an association's building instead of a church building, literally and metaphorically became a landmark of liberal Protestantism in the Netherlands after its doors were opened on 2 May 1880. Until well into the twentieth century, it would remain a popular venue and conference hall for modernists. Ironically, Salm would also design a landmark of militant anti-modernist orthodoxy in Amsterdam: the *Keizersgrachtkerk*, colloquially known as the '*kathedraal der Doleantie*' ('Kuyperian cathedral'), which opened its doors in 1888.¹

On the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Free Congregation, in 1897, the building was embellished with a stained-glass window representing Moses and Jesus. In a celebratory speech, P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr. explained that there were two principles symbolised by this window.² First, the window signified a decisive break with Protestants' innate fear of visual culture, which had originated as a response to Roman Catholic image worship and was still ubiquitous in present-day Protestantism. Second, Hugenholtz thought that a religious community should surround itself with artistic representations of its spiritual forbears. The Free Congregation acknowledged that God alone is to be thanked for 'experiences of the sacred' and did therefore not want to be named after any human being – Hugenholtz was referring here to 'Lutheranism', 'Calvinism' and the like. Yet, by having a window such as the one representing Moses and Jesus, the Free Congregation indicated that it wanted to learn from people whose thoughts provided exceptional and original sources of spiritual inspiration. In accordance with the principle of religious eclecticism, according to which not only the Old and New Testaments, but also

¹ Bank and Van Buuren, 1900, 378-380.

² De Baar recognises the programmatic character of the stained-glass windows. See: De Baar, *Religie en feminisme*, 18-19.

poetry, literature, and non-Christian scriptures were valued as building blocks of personal religiosity, Hugenholtz stated that the Free Congregation should install windows of great 'pagan' and other inspiring figures as well.³

His words met with approval. As early as 1898, a second window was inaugurated with portraits of Luther and Zwingli. Both sixteenth-century Reformers, Hugenholtz explained, inspired admiration for their devotion to freedom of conscience. Although the Free Congregation had come into being as a secession from the Calvinist-based Dutch Reformed Church, Hugenholtz stressed that Calvin did not merit inclusion, probably because liberal Protestants regarded those who claimed to be the true heirs to Calvin's spiritual legacy as enemies of freedom of conscience.⁴ In the following five years, windows were added that depicted Socrates and Marcus Aurelius (121-180), Paul and Augustine, Dante Alighieri (±1265-1321) and Thomas à Kempis (±1380-1471), Catherine of Siena (1347-1380) and Juliana of Stolberg (1506-1580), Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677) and Immanuel Kant, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), and also the Dutch modernists Ph.R. Hugenholtz and A.D. Loman, which demonstrates that the pastors of the Free Congregation were believed to be on a par with these world-renowned idealists and visionaries. In the run-up to the international conference of religious liberals in 1903, which was held in the building of the Free Congregation, the American Unitarian Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) and the Scottish philosopher Thomas Carlyle were immortalised in a stained-glass window as well. Later, this honour was also conferred upon the poets Joost van den Vondel (1587-1679) and William Shakespeare (1564-1616), and, lastly, upon the recently deceased P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr. in 1912.⁵

In this way, a glass 'hall of fame' was built, depicting people who had distinguished themselves for their principles of life, erudition, artistic genius, ethics, and piety, and whose lives and ideas were therefore seen as eternal sources of edification. These people were, so to speak, 'spiritual aristocrats', who could 'tutor' current and future generations.⁶ A close reading of *De Hervorming* reveals that this paradigm of a 'spiritual aristocracy of tutors', represented in

3 [P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr. in:] x.i., 'Stadsnieuws – Het feest van "de Vrije Gemeente"', *De Telegraaf* v.1794 (29 November 1897), 2; P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., 'Bij de herdenking van het twintigjarig bestaan van de Vrije Gemeente', *Stemmen uit de Vrije Gemeente* xx (1897), 353-373, here 366-370.

4 [P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr. in:] 'Stadsnieuws – Luther en Zwingli', *Algemeen Handelsblad* LXXI.21803 (7 February 1898), morning paper, 2.

5 De Baar, *Religie en feminisme*, 18, 33, note 42; 'Stadsnieuws – Inwijding gedenkraam P.H. Hugenholtz Jr.', *Algemeen Handelsblad* LXXXV (22 April 1912), evening paper, 1.

6 The rationale behind that was to turn people into strong personalities, to help individuals to live up to their potential. In the modernist movement, individuals were called on to 'become what they are'. Exemplary in this respect are: [J.W. van der Linden], 'Referaat van den heer J.W. van der Linden', *De Hervorming* 1879-37 (13 September 1879), 145-146, here 146; Mary,

the stained-glass windows of the Free Congregation, also found expression in a discourse that implicitly permeated modernist discussions on ecclesial and social affairs. An analysis of this discourse reveals which principles were at the bottom of modernist worldviews and outlooks on life. After explaining what is exactly meant by 'the discourse of a spiritual aristocracy of tutors', this chapter shows how I discovered this discourse by analysing *De Hervorming*, on the basis of two case studies. The first case study is about the discussion on lay preaching, which should be read against the background of modernists' aim of 'modernising Christianity'. The second case study deals with the discussion on district nursing, which can be seen as part of modernists' aspiration to 'Christianise society'. While the discussion on lay preaching took place in the 1870s and after 1900, the discussion on district nursing primarily occurred in the 1890s. This difference in time reflects the general development of the Dutch modernist movement, as analysed in chapter 2. In the 1870s, ecclesial matters were at the centre of modernist debate, followed by two decades in which social issues became more prominent. Discussions on church-related affairs regained pre-eminence during the 'ecclesial turn' after 1900.

2 Defining 'Spiritual', 'Aristocrats', and 'Tutoring'⁷

When speaking about the particulars of an entire group, generalisations are too easily made. This is especially the case when analysing the modernist

'Doodzwijgen of protesteerden?', *Ibid.* 1888-42 (20 October 1888), 165-166, here 166; J. Herderschee, 'Boete en kruis', *Ibid.* 1889-14 (6 April 1889), 53; Mary, 'Is karakterloosheid het karakter van onzen tijd?', *Ibid.* 1890-47 (22 November 1890), 185-186, here 186; [T. Cannegieter], 'Toespraak van prof. Cannegieter', *Ibid.* 1906-44 (3 November 1906), 345-347, here 346; [K.H. Roessingh in:] G.J. Heering, 'Hoofdartikelen – "Persoonlijkheid en cultuur"', *Ibid.* 1916-42 (14 October 1916), 358-359; [G.J. Heering in:] M.C. van Mourik Broekman, 'Hoofdartikelen – Heering's inaugurele oratie', *Ibid.* 1917-19 (12 May 1917), 154-155, here 154; W. Banning, 'Kerkelijk leven – De Woodbrookersbeweging en de kerk', *Ibid.* 1918-46 (16 November 1918), 183; C.B. Burger, 'Iets over persoonlijkheid', in: *Vrijzinnig Christelijke Studentenbond – v.c.s.b.* (Leiden 1924), 5-9; R.M.F. Houwink, 'Vorming der persoonlijkheid en geloof als wegen tot bevrijding', *De Smidse* v.2 (February 1930), 42-56; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, 'Persoonlijkheid', *Ibid.* vi.6 (June 1931), 161-166; J.M. de Jong, 'De strijd om persoonlijkheid', *Ibid.* ix.10 (October 1934), 287-295; P.H. Ronge, 'Over de ontwikkeling van individu tot persoonlijkheid', *Ibid.* x.4 (April 1935), 105-120.

7 This section is in large part based on a close reading of entire volumes of *De Hervorming*. Most observations mentioned in this section therefore refer to articles published in this magazine. For each observation, there are many more examples to give than those mentioned in the footnotes. Examples have been chosen from years with a certain interval between them, to demonstrate that the discourse of a spiritual aristocracy of tutors was dominant throughout the *entire* period of study and not just in a particular decade.

movement, as those who identified themselves as ‘modernists’ had various conceptions of God, Jesus, and the Bible, and did not all belong to the same church denomination. Speaking about the characteristics of modernists as a group is possible only on an abstract level. Nonetheless, there is something that can be said about the particulars of the modernist movement on a more concrete level. An in-depth analysis of the content of discussions on church- and society-related issues in *De Hervorming* reveals that most modernists expressed their opinions in a shared discourse, in which two notions were prominent: a strong sense of differentiation between levels of spiritual development, and the idea of learning by example. This chapter coins the term ‘spiritual aristocracy’ in reference to the former and refers to the latter idea as ‘tutorage’. Before explicating these terms in further detail, it is necessary to keep two things in mind. First, to say that there was a dominant discourse that can be heard in modernist discussions is not to say that *every* single discussant went along with this. Second, this discourse did not lead all modernists to propose the *same* solutions and to advocate the *same* concrete initiatives. Different modernists gave different answers to the question of how ‘spiritual aristocrats’ should behave and act in order to ‘tutor’ the spiritually less developed.

Modernism was a product of its age and modernists were children of their age. Modernist thinking was therefore imbued with elements that were characteristic of (late) nineteenth-century thinking in general. Taken as a whole, modernism was rooted in an evolutionist worldview and a strong belief in progress.⁸ Scholarly findings, scientific discoveries, and technological innovations fuelled the idea that mankind was evolving towards perfection, that the world was becoming a better place as time went on. Driven by optimism about the future and about mankind’s possibilities, attempts were made to let as many people as possible share in these ‘blessings’ of the modern era. This was an endeavour not only of the elite, but even more so of the newly emerged middle classes, who could thereby distinguish themselves from the classes below them.⁹ In bourgeois circles, an offensive was launched to ‘civilise’ lower-class people. The latter, it was believed, ought to be stimulated to

8 A good introduction in the nineteenth-century belief in ‘progress’ is given in the second part of: R.A. Nisbet, *History of the Idea of Progress* (New York [1980] 1994).

9 A.J. de Regt, *Arbeidersgezinnen en beschavingsarbeid: ontwikkelingen in Nederland 1870-1940. Een historisch-sociologische studie* (Meppel 1984), 246-247; J.A. Righart, ‘Moraliseringsoffensief in Nederland in de periode 1850-1880’, in: H.F.M. Peeters, H.M. Dresen-Coenders and J.A. Brandenbarg (eds.), *Vijf eeuwen gezinsleven. Liefde, huwelijk en opvoeding in Nederland* (Nijmegen 1988), 194-208, 205.

live their lives in accordance with the norms and values of the classes above it and to drop outmoded views and convictions.¹⁰ Modernist thinking bears the marks of all of these ingredients of the typically nineteenth-century 'bourgeois' outlook on life.

In line with this, a sharp differentiation between levels of spiritual development was made in modernist thinking. This division between spiritually 'less' and 'more' developed people was undeniably the dominant idea that guided modernists in their reflections on all kinds of issues and, even more significantly, was at the bottom of the solutions modernists came up with in order to address these issues. The adjective 'spiritual' (*'geestelijk'* in Dutch) can refer to everything related to religious life in particular as well as to everything related to the human mind in general, thus including both intelligence and morality. In modernist thinking, being cognitively, religiously, and ethically 'developed' was synonymous with being 'civilised' and constituted an inextricable triad. Being developed in only one of these segments of spiritual life (cognition, religion, and morals) without being equally developed in the other two, modernist opinion leaders warned, would lead to one-sidedness. Those who were intelligent while being ignorant of higher things and without having a high moral standard at the same time ran the risk of being egotistical, self-idolising, impassive singletons who neglected the riches of their inner life and the transformative power of ideals.¹¹ In *De Hervorming*, contemporary education as well

10 For the Dutch context, see: B. Kruithof, 'De deugdzame natie. Het burgerlijk beschavingsoffensief van de Maatschappij tot Nut van 't Algemeen tussen 1784 en 1860', *Symposium* 11.1 (1980), 22-37. By spreading their own principles of life to the lower classes, the bourgeoisie tried to legitimise and consolidate its own social and political influence. See: P.R.D. Stokvis, 'Beschavingsoffensieven in de negentiende eeuw', *De Negentiende Eeuw* xx.3 (1996), 161-162, here 162.

11 E.g.: W.C. van Manen, 'Onze leestafel – "De eenheid der wetenschap en het recht van het ideaal"', *De Hervorming* 1879-18 (3 May 1879), 71; J. Hooykaas Herderscheê, 'Met welke wapenen moet de levensmoeheid van velen in onzen tijd worden bestreden?', *Ibid.* 1881-18 (7 May 1881), 70-71, here 70; A.W. van Geer, 'Stellingen over: Godsdienstzin op de lagere school', *Ibid.* 1887-02 (8 January 1887), 6; J. Knoppers W.Kz., 'Over zedelijkheid en zedelijke opvoeding', *Ibid.* 1888-52 (29 December 1888), 205-206; E. Snellen, 'Gevoelsleven en gemoedsleven', *Ibid.* 1893-05 (4 February 1893), 17-18; H., 'Zekerheid en twijfel', *Ibid.* 1893-12 (25 March 1893), 47; E. Snellen, 'Eerbied', *Ibid.* 1893-29 (22 July 1893), 113-114; Censor [A. Carlier], 'Een compleet mensch', *Ibid.* 1897-25 (19 June 1897), 97; [L. Knappert in: H. de Lang], 'Redactioneel – De "handelingen" der algemeene vergadering', *Ibid.* 1917-05 (3 February 1917), 36; W. Swart, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – De wonderkwesitie', *Ibid.* 1918-19 (11 May 1918), 74-75; A.H. van der Hoeve, 'Verstand en gevoel', *Ibid.* 1921-35 (3 September 1921), 273-274, here 273; J. IJntema, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Godsdienstig geloof is meer dan een wereldbeschouwing', *Ibid.* 1922-45 (11 November 1922), 355-356, here 356; E.C. Knappert, 'Ingezonden', *Ibid.* 1923-05 (3 February 1923), 37-38.

as scientists and writers were repeatedly accused of having such a one-sided focus on intellectual development. Piety that was not supported by convincing, reasonable conceptions of God and not accompanied by the acknowledgement that Old Testament ethics were rooted in a 'primitive' outlook on life resulted in orthodox zealotry and blind hatred of people with different convictions.¹² A 'liberal' view of God, the Bible, and the nature of man represented a higher state of believing than orthodoxy. Modernists saw intellectual, religious, and ethical development as closely linked. Generally, first-generation modernists even believed that ethics without God were simply impossible. Atheist freethinkers might claim that a *morale indépendante* existed, that ethics had nothing to do with religion, but according to modernists, they were just unwilling to acknowledge that the sense of what was 'right' and 'wrong', that finds expression in the voice of conscience, is God-given.¹³ Those who showed themselves highly developed in all three areas united under the term 'spiritual' were regarded living at the highest level of civilisation. Referring to such people, this study coins the term 'spiritual aristocrats'.

- 12 E.g.: W. Zaalberg, 'Godsdienstige verdraagzaamheid', *De Hervorming* 1889-22 (1 June 1889), 85-86; 1889-23 (8 June 1889), 89-90; Censor [A. Carlier], 'Onverdraagzaamheid', *Ibid.* 1897-02 (9 January 1897), 5-6; 'Berichten, enz. – Orthodoxe arrogantie officieel aangeemoedigd', *Ibid.* 1903-32 (8 August 1903) 252-253; Censor [A. Carlier], 'Errare humanum est', *Ibid.* 1906-12 (24 March 1906), 89-90, here 90; H.W. Heuvel, 'De "fijnen"', *Ibid.* 1913-29 (19 July 1913), 225-226, here 225; A.C. Schade van Westrum, 'Godsdienstig gemeenschapsleven – Modus vivendi of modus separandi', *Ibid.* 1924-39 (27 September 1924), 308-309, here 308. Chapter 1 has already provided examples of modernist views on Old Testament ethics.
- 13 There was debate as to what extent religion and ethics coincided, but not a single modernist doubted that the two were very closely connected. E.g.: [H.Ph. de Kanter in:] 'Mededeelingen betreffende het Nederlandsch Protestantenvond', *Ibid.* 1876-11 (16 March 1876), 3; Silvanus, 'Een gewichtig vraagstuk – ook voor de kerk?', *Ibid.* 1876-30 (27 July 1876), 1-2, here 1; [A. Kuenen in:] 'Nederlandsche Protestantenvond – Oud-Beijerland', *Ibid.* 1879-30 (26 July 1879), 117-118; [J.A. Böhringer in:] 'Nederlandsche Protestantenvond – 's-Gravenhage', *Ibid.* 1881-11 (19 March 1881), 42-43, here 43; P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., 'Iets over het verband van godsdienst en zedelijkheid', *Stemmen uit de Vrije Gemeente* IV (1881), 112-120; L.M.B., 'Ingezonden stukken', *De Hervorming* 1888-01 (7 January 1888), 4 [this issue is erroneously dated '7 January 1887']; 'Zedelijkheid en godsdienst', *Ibid.* 1888-48 (1 December 1888), 189; 1888-49 (8 December 1888), 193-194; 1888-50 (15 December 1888), 197-198; J.A. Helper Sesbrugger, 'Godsdienstloos en toch. . .?', *Ibid.* 1889-50 (14 December 1889), 200; W. Zaalberg, 'Goed gekozen', *Ibid.* 1895-02 (12 January 1895), 5-6, here 5; Censor [A. Carlier], 'Geestelijke ontwrichting', *Ibid.* 1897-27 (3 July 1897), 105; G.A. van den Bergh van Eysinga, 'Voor hart en leven – Godsdienst en zedelijkheid', *Ibid.* 1899-14 (8 April 1899), 55; [A. Bruining in:] M.C. van Mourik Broekman, 'Prof. Bruining's geschrift over onafhankelijke moraal', *Ibid.* 1909-23 (5 June 1909), 177-178, here 178; [C. Pekelharing in:] S.K. Bakker, 'Leestafel – "Theologisch Tijdschrift"', *Ibid.* 1915-40 (2 October 1915), 355-356, here 356; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Godsdienst als cultuurkracht', *Ibid.* 1920-04 (31 January 1920), 13-14, here 13.

As regards the first element designated by the adjective 'spiritual', namely 'cognition', modernists actively tried to popularise contemporary scholarly and scientific knowledge. Viewed as a powerful means to 'civilise' the lower classes, popular education was a subject that deeply concerned modernists.¹⁴ The *Maatschappij tot Nut van 't Algemeen*, which devoted itself to the intellectual development and moral uplift of the Dutch people by issuing brochures on all kinds of topics, founding primary schools, and establishing savings banks, was consequently fully supported in NPB circles.¹⁵ Supporters of the *Nut* and that of the NPB overlapped to a large extent; both organisations relied on the support of the middle classes, which saw themselves as having a crucial role in Dutch society. The Lutheran minister J.A. Böhringer (1834-1911), who, as a member of the general board of the *Nut* and an active member of the NPB, epitomised the strong affinity between the two organisations, even went so far as to completely identify the future of the *Nut* with that of the middle classes during the *Nut*'s 1884 centennial celebration: "it is chiefly the middle class that keeps up the Society's strength; the bourgeoisie is the link that brings the highest and lowest classes into contact with each other and through which a peaceful solution of social issues has to come about."¹⁶ The *Nut* and the NPB both aimed at giving people more insight into present-day issues, in order to allow them to *consciously* make 'right' decisions in shaping their lives. The way in which these organisations supplied information was therefore not value-free: the *Nut* and the NPB tried to convince their target audience of the truth of the viewpoints they popularised. Yet, although it formally aimed to "engender and further religious-ethical life," the *Nut* was not a religious association and did not issue brochures in which theological ideas or church-related matters were dealt with.¹⁷

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the NPB therefore decided to publish brochures of its own on a regular basis, discussing religious topics

14 As Van Loenen Martinet eloquently expressed it, popular education was "one of the most powerful leverages for popular development." Quoted from: [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – De Onderwijs-enquête', *De Hervorming* 1890-38 (20 September 1890), 150.

15 H.F.J.M. van den Eerenbeemt, *In het spoor van de vooruitgang. Het moderniseringsproces van de Nederlandse samenleving* (Tilburg 1989), 204; Buitenwerf-van der Molen, *God van vooruitgang*, 50-52.

16 [J.A. Böhringer in: F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'Binnenland – Het eeuwfeest van de Maatschappij tot Nut van 't Algemeen', *De Hervorming* 1884-33 (16 August 1884), 132-133, here 133.

17 W.H. Warnsinck Bz., 'Een woord over de Maatschappij tot Nut van 't Algemeen, beschouwd als eene Christelijke vereniging', *Vaderlandsche Letteroefeningen* LXXXI.2 (1841), 309-320, here 313-315. See also: W.C. van Manen, 'Binnenland – De godsdienst en het Nut', *De Hervorming* 1885-20 (16 May 1885), 78-79.

and, as religion was said to be at the bottom of all current problems in society, social issues as well, from an explicitly liberal religious point of view. The series in which these brochures were initially included, called '*Geschriften uitgegeven vanwege den Nederlandschen Protestantenvbond*' ('Writings Issued by the Dutch League of Protestants'), came to be split up and renamed into '*Redelijke godsdienst*' ('Reasonable Religion') and '*Voor denkende mensen*' ('For Rational People'), which were both issued between 1909 and 1914, followed by '*Onderzoekt alle dingen*' ('Prove All Things') and '*Vrij Christendom*' ('Free Christianity'), which both started and ended in 1915.¹⁸ The titles given to the first three series are very indicative of the importance modernists attached to the advancement of intellectual life and the strong relationship they perceived between intellectual and religious life. Issuing brochures was meant to stimulate people to not unthinkingly accept dogmas and beliefs handed down to them by external 'authorities', such as ministers and confessions of faith, but to acquire, envisage, and formulate their own ideas about the world surrounding them and their own conceptions of God. The titles of the NPB brochure series implied that only liberal religious ideas and principles deserved to be called 'reasonable', thereby at the same time disqualifying orthodox ideas and principles as 'unreasonable'. They suggested that no one who *rationaly* reflected upon religion could ever arrive at orthodox viewpoints. Having liberal religious ideas was thus a sign of a 'higher' state of spiritual development. It was modernists' vocation to elevate the state of spiritual development in Dutch society.

The strong link in modernist thinking between intellectual development and religious conceptions played an important role in discussions on the question of how the lowest classes could and should be reached. Modernists perceived that poorly educated low-class people tended to be either orthodox or religiously indifferent.¹⁹ Spreading modernist ideas among them should therefore be accompanied by intellectual instruction. To their amazement, modern-

18 The brochures of which these series consisted are listed separately in the bibliography.

19 E.g.: 'Waarom is de "mindere man" orthodox?', *De Hervorming* 1874-26 (25 June 1874), 2; M.A. de Jong, 'Ingezonden stukken – De taak der kerk', *Ibid.* 1878-01 (5 January 1878), 3-4, here 4; J. Rinner, 'Verheffing van het godsdienstonderwijs', *Ibid.* 1880-24 (12 June 1880), 94; Censor [A. Carlier], 'Het verstand van arme mensen', *Ibid.* 1893-38 (23 September 1893), 149-150, here 150; R.J. van der Meulen, 'Ingezonden stukken – Hervormde Hollanders in Duitschland', *Ibid.* 1902-02 (11 January 1902), 13; G. Heuvelman, 'Ingezonden – Nog eens: theosophie', *Ibid.* 1916-32 (5 August 1916), 274; H. Vrendenberg Cz., 'Onkerkelijk of ongodsdienstig?', *Ibid.* 1917-09 (3 March 1917), 70; W. Drop, 'Godsdienst en maatschappij – Nieuwe geest in nieuwen tijd', *Ibid.* 1921-26 (2 July 1921), 203-204, here 204.

ists also noted that orthodoxy and ignorance were not necessarily two sides of the same coin. Although neo-Calvinism was highly intellectualistic, modernists could not understand how someone as intelligent as Kuyper could cling to religious beliefs that modern theology had relegated to the realm of fantasy.²⁰ They were equally puzzled by the conversions of several public figures to Roman Catholicism in the early twentieth century. They could see that the Roman Catholic Church exerted some attraction because of its devotional and sacramental character, but could not grasp why intelligent people voluntarily laid their reason aside by embracing the most 'nonsensical' dogmas.²¹ Here, a paradox became manifest. Contrary to modernism, neo-Calvinism and Roman Catholicism were well-constructed theological *systems*. As regards *structure*, these systems had an intellectualistic character, as every dogma perfectly related to all other dogmas, while all dogmas combined formed a worldview that was, in itself, a logical unity. In modernist eyes, this could blind even intelligent people to the fact that the *content* of these systems, taken as a whole, made no sense.²² For that reason, and also to counteract religious indifference, modernists devoted much effort to propagandising their ideas, in an attempt to show their theological superiority over orthodoxy in its Protestant and Catholic manifestations, not only among the lowest classes, but also among the higher classes.²³

20 E.g.: A.F. Mackenstien, 'Kroniek', *De Hervorming* 1873-33 (14 August 1873), 3; A. Admiraal, 'Leekenlektuur', *Ibid.* 1875-09 (4 March 1875), 1. Decades later, the attraction orthodoxy managed to exert was explained in psychological terms in modernist circles, by making a distinction between people with and people without a 'mass mentality'. Exemplary is: Van Mourik Broekman, *De orthodoxe en moderne geloofsprediking uit psychologisch oogpunt vergeleken*.

21 E.g.: M.C. van Mourik Broekman, 'Hoofdartikel – Redelijk gelooven', *De Hervorming* 1921-05 (5 February 1921), 34-35; L. Knappert, 'Kerkelijk leven – Roomsche worden', *Ibid.* 1922-08 (25 February 1922), 60-61; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, 'Een overgang tot het katholicisme', *Ibid.* 1925-33 (15 August 1925), 259-261; 1925-34 (22 August 1925), 268-269.

22 E.g.: G.J. Heering, 'Hoofdartikelen – Een vriend, die onze feiten toont. . . en onze deugden', *Ibid.* 1915-40 (2 October 1915), 350-351, here 350; Van Mourik Broekman, *De orthodoxe en moderne geloofsprediking uit psychologisch oogpunt vergeleken*, 8-9, 22; A.C. Schade van Westrum, 'Kerkelijk leven – Rome en Dordt', *De Hervorming* 1918-49 (7 December 1918), 194-195, here 195; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, 'Hoofdartikel – Ons calvinistisch volksdeel', *Ibid.* 1920-46 (20 November 1920), 181-182, here 181; T. Cannegieter, *Protestantsch geloofsbezit en roomsche kerkleer* (Haarlem 1922), 19; J. Lindeboom, *De psychologische beteekenis der richtingsverschillen* (Baarn 1924), 39.

23 The series *Redelijke godsdienst* targeted the more developed, while the series *Voor denkende menschen* was meant for the less developed. As noted in: G.J. Heering, 'Dr Cornelis Elias Hooykaas', in: *Handelingen en mededeelingen van de Maatschappij der Nederlandse Letterkunde te Leiden, over het jaar 1933-1934* 11 (Leiden 1934), 67-78, here 73.

In English, the word 'mind' can refer to the intellect (*verstand* in Dutch), but also to feelings, introspection, and sensory experiences (*gemoed*). In modernist thinking, it was deemed important to be 'developed' in both realms of the mind: in the realm of *verstand* and in the realm of *gemoed*. This relates to the second element that encompassed by the term 'spiritual', namely 'religion' in the sense of piety. Although the image of first-generation modernism as being intellectualistic – an image that was accentuated by malcontents after 1900 – is not completely groundless, the earliest modernists were in fact, just like later generations of modernists, deeply concerned with the inner, emotional life. Modern theology not only necessitated a reformation of religious imagery, terminology, and concepts, but was also seen as a stimulus for a regeneration of piety. It shed a bright light on the *true* message of the Bible and hence exposed the *true* principles of life contained in Old and New Testament texts. These principles, particularly as expressed in the life of Jesus, should be internalised in order for them to be the foundation of all thoughts and deeds. This was the true meaning of 'piety': living in accordance with the principles that suffused the spirit of Jesus (and others with a highly developed inner life), recognising that these principles have a divine origin, and being grateful for a life of close harmony with God.²⁴

'*Vrije vroomheid*' ('free piety') was the ideal that the NPB had in mind.²⁵ In the modernist movement, many voices could be heard expressing concern about the level of piety in Dutch society. For several reasons, free piety could

24 E.g.: B. Tideman Jz., 'Een goed werk', *De Hervorming* 1876-01 (6 January 1876), 2-3; 'Geestelijke erfenis', *Ibid.* 1879-32 (9 August 1879), 125-126; [A.W. van Wijk in:] 'De betekenissen der moderne richting voor onzen tijd', *Ibid.* 1882-17 (29 April 1882), 66; B. Tideman Jz., 'Onze leestafel – Miskening', *Ibid.* 1883-17 (28 April 1883), 68; B. Tideman Jz., 'Voor alles goed', *Ibid.* 1889-01 (5 January 1889), 1-2, here 1; W. Zaalberg, 'Oud en afgezaagd – toch herhaald', *Ibid.* 1891-37 (12 September 1891), 147-148; E. Snellen, 'Bergopwaarts', *Ibid.* 1894-39 (29 September 1894), 153-154; H.L. Oort, 'Onze vereniging', *Ibid.* 1899-45 (11 November 1899), 185; [L. Knappert], 'Over het persoonlijke in de prediking', *Ibid.* 1902-02 (11 January 1902), 9-10; L.N. de Jong, 'Ingezonden stukken – Het vrijzinnig beginsel', *Ibid.* 1905-24 (17 June 1905), 190; W.H. Stenfort Kroese, 'Toespraak van W.H. Stenfort Kroese', *Ibid.* 1907-44 (2 November 1907), 346-347; H.R. Offerhaus, 'Een nieuw art. 1', *Ibid.* 1908-24 (13 June 1908), 187; De Jong, *Vrije vroomheid*; [H.Y. Groenewegen in:] 'Mededeelingen – Wassenaar', *De Hervorming* 1924-49 (6 December 1924), 390.

25 Because, as H.G. Hagen eloquently formulated it, "true piety can only breathe in the atmosphere of freedom." Quoted from: H.G. Hagen, 'Toespraak', *Ibid.* 1892-44 (29 October 1892), 173-174, here 174.

not flourish. In orthodox circles, there was a persistent misconception about the true nature of piety; there, being 'pious' was equated with worshipping Jesus, clinging to the word of Scripture, and assenting to creeds.²⁶ Consequently, orthodoxy regarded every rejection, or even nuancing, of the idea that Jesus was the Son of God, that the authority of Scripture was non-debatable, and that sixteenth-century creeds were the purest formulations of the Christian religion as a subversion of piety, and did everything it could to extinguish such 'impiety'. However, in modernist eyes, piety had to do with an inner disposition, with susceptibility for impressions of the divine and a cheerful reverence for God. Next to the orthodox misinterpretation of piety, there was a tendency in modern culture to grossly neglect the significance of devotion, a tendency over which modernists repeatedly lamented. On the one hand, orthodoxy was to blame: orthodoxy defined being pious as endorsing certain creeds and a certain interpretation of the Bible, with the result that people who could no longer accept these creeds and this interpretation often lost their religious faith altogether.²⁷ On the other hand, the materialistic philosophy of life that emerged in the course of the nineteenth century fostered religious indifference: those who were intellectually highly developed and who should set the standard for society as a whole did not show as much interest in religious mat-

26 E.g.: [R.T.H.P.L.A. van Boneval Faure in:] 'Twaalfde algemeene vergadering van den Ned. Prot. Bond, gehouden te Groningen 30 en 31 October 1882', *De Hervorming* 1882-44 (4 November 1882), 173-175, here 175; [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'Binnenland – Schrikwekkende onthullingen', *Ibid.* 1883-06 (10 February 1883), 22-23, here 23; J.E.M., 'Catholicisme en protestantisme', *Ibid.* 1889-37 (14 September 1889), 145-146; H.W.Ph.E. van den Bergh van Eysinga, 'Rechtzinnigheid', *Ibid.* 1896-19 (9 May 1896), 73-74; H.L. Oort, 'Onze vereeniging', *Ibid.* 1899-45 (11 November 1899), 185; [C.J. Niemeijer in:] 'Berichten, enz. – Vrijzinnige hervormden in Friesland', *Ibid.* 1905-32 (12 August 1905), 251-252, here 251; [D.E.W. van Weel in:] 'Berichten, enz. – Tegen confessioneel drijven', *Ibid.* 1913-29 (19 July 1913), 227-228; J.J. Bleeker, 'Waardeering van andersdenkenden', *Ibid.* 1914-26 (27 June 1914), 221-222, here 221. As K. Vos felt, Kuypersians' 'misconception' of piety had 'ruined' more pious souls than any sin whatsoever. See: K. Vos, 'Een teeken des tijds', *Ibid.* 1912-05 (3 February 1912), 33-34, here 34.

27 E.g.: [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Wat wonder?', *Ibid.* 1891-33 (15 August 1891), 134; Censor [A. Carlier], 'Wee der orthodoxie!', *Ibid.* 1894-06 (10 February 1894), 22-23, here 22; J.M.A.C., 'Ingezonden stukken – Verantwoording', *Ibid.* 1897-21 (22 May 1897), 83; S. Cramer, 'De geschiedkennis van dr. Kuypers in de Tweede Kamer', *Ibid.* 1904-05 (30 January 1904), 33-34, here 34; 'Uit "de Hollandsche Lelie"', *Ibid.* 1905-26 (1 July 1905), 201-203, here 202; 'Berichten, enz. – Van onzen minister-president', *Ibid.* 1914-29 (18 July 1914), 250-251, here 251; A.C. Schade van Westrum, 'Hoofd-artikel – De uitslag der volkstelling', *Ibid.* 1922-38 (23 September 1922), 297-298, here 298.

ters as modernists wished.²⁸ The modernist movement itself was not free of indifference either: already before the rise of malcontentism, there were complaints about a lack of piety among modernists.²⁹ 'Free piety' was clearly an ideal that was hard to attain.

The importance modernists attached to piety found expression in an animated singing culture. As mentioned in chapter 4, the NPB issued a hymnbook in 1882, which quickly gained popularity in modernist circles – NPB branches and many modernist-oriented church congregations made use of it during their religious services – and was revised in 1920. Hymns were regarded as the pre-eminent vehicles for giving expression to the deepest stirrings of the human soul (*gemoedserveringen*).³⁰ As the preface to the NPB hymnbook of 1882 formulates it: music has the power to elevate humans to "higher things, the ideal and the invisible, and hence to religious feelings." A hymn "should be the purest and most beautiful expression of the most sacred and most tender emotions, stirred up inside us by the deeper understanding of religion."³¹ This 'deeper understanding of religion' referred to modernists' firm conviction that the individual's *gemoed* is the ultimate judge of religious truth. Although *licentia poetica* was permitted, hymns ought not to express religious experiences in words that would only make sense in the context of an outmoded, supernaturalist worldview. Free piety, as the NPB pastor L.N. de Jong (1869-1937) explained, could not do without "a rational verbalisation."³²

28 E.g.: 'Volharden', *De Hervorming* 1878-35 (31 August 1878), 1; [P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr.], 'Binnenland – In de "Vrije Gemeente"', *Ibid.* 1887-50 (10 December 1887), 199; E. Snellen, 'Ontnuchtering of geestdrift?', *Ibid.* 1889-35 (31 August 1889), 137-138, here 137; F. Pijper, 'De toekomst der vrijzinnige richting', *Ibid.* 1890-01 (4 January 1890), 1-2, here 2; x., 'Toynbee-werk', *Ibid.* 1896-04 (25 January 1896), 13-14, here 14; Censor [A. Carlier], 'Geestelijke ontwrichting', *Ibid.* 1897-27 (3 July 1897), 105; H. Oort, 'Hoofdartikelen – De waarde van het geloof in God', *Ibid.* 1917-11 (17 March 1917), 86-87, here 86.

29 E.g.: [M. Wijt in:] 'Nederlandsche Protestantenvbond – Knijpe', *Ibid.* 1878-51 (21 December 1878), 1-2; [H.U. Meyboom in:] 'Veertiende algemeene vergadering van den Nederl. Protestantenvbond', *Ibid.* 1884-46 (15 November 1884), 183; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Vergadering van moderne theologen', *Ibid.* 1899-15 (15 April 1899), 57; H.L. Oort, 'Vroomheid', *Ibid.* 1901-42 (19 October 1901), 330; E.M. ten Cate, 'Door de woestijn', *Ibid.* 1907-29 (20 July 1907), 225-226, here 225; K., 'Berichten, enz. – Uit "de Vrije Gemeente"', *Ibid.* 1908-07 (15 February 1908), 52-53, here 53.

30 A. le Coq, *Wat vlied' of bezwijk'. Het vrijzinnige kerklied in Nederland, 1870-1973* (Kampen 2005), 35-38. See also: 'Godsdienstige opvoeding', *De Hervorming* 1880-35 (28 August 1880), 137-138, here 138; 'Onze liederenbundel', *Ibid.* 1886-42 (16 October 1886), 167-168; [G. Heuvelman in:] 'Berichten, enz. – Zingen', *Ibid.* 1900-46 (17 November 1900), 356-357. Quoted in: Le Coq, *Wat vlied' of bezwijk'*, 35-36. See also: 'Onze liederenbundel', *De Hervorming* 1886-42 (16 October 1886), 167-168.

32 L.N. de Jong, 'Ingezonden stukken – Het vrijzinnig beginsel', *Ibid.* 1905-24 (17 June 1905), 190.

Inner life was not only believed to be deeply intertwined with intellectual life, but also – and this relates to the third constituent of the word ‘spiritual’ – with ethical life. Although far from all modernists went as far as to claim that morality and religion are synonymous, the frequent use of the term ‘religious-ethical life’ indicates that morality (*zedelijkheid* in Dutch) and piety, or religion, were regarded as closely connected. The general feeling in modernist circles was that a correct interpretation of what ‘morality’ is depends on a correct understanding of what ‘piety’ is.³³ Non-liberal Christians, non-Christians, and atheists could lead honest, sincere and virtuous lives. Yet, the first failed to recognise that the Bible, taken literally in its entirety or read through a dogmatic lens, also involves rather barbarian morals; the second did not see that the Christian religion is the basis of morality in its purest form; and the third were unwilling to acknowledge that morality does not exist (entirely) independently of God. Modernists believed that the principles of morality are entrenched in man’s conscience. Again, not all of them went so far as to equate the voice of conscience with the voice of God, but they agreed that the ethical principles expressed in the human conscience are, in one way or another, related to God.³⁴ No one had the right to impose upon someone else’s con-

33 E.g.: Hugenholtz, *Het kenmerkende der moderne richting*, 35; ‘Zedelijkheid en godsdienst, *De Hervorming* 1888-50 (15 December 1888), 197-198; B. Tideman Jz., ‘Voor alles goed’, *Ibid.* 1889-01 (5 January 1889), 1-2; W. Zaalberg, ‘Goed gekozen’, *Ibid.* 1895-02 (12 January 1895), 5-6, here.

34 E.g.: ‘Godsdienstige opvoeding’, *Ibid.* 1880-37 (11 September 1880), 146; ‘Het geheim van de rechte verhouding tusschen ouders en kind’, *Ibid.* 1882-03 (21 January 1882), 9; Z., ‘Snippers – Geweten’, *Ibid.* 1884-32 (9 August 1884), 127-128, here 127; J. Herderschee, ‘Het geweten’, *Ibid.* 1888-12 (24 March 1888), 45-46; D. André de la Porte, ‘Hebben de modernen, voor de godsdienstige vorming hunner kinderen, hulp te zoeken bij de voorstellingen der orthodoxie?’, *Ibid.* 1888-18 (5 May 1888), 69-70; W. Zaalberg, ‘Oud en afgezaagd – toch herhaald’, *Ibid.* 1891-37 (12 September 1891), 147-148; G.L. van Loenen, ‘De middelweg’, *Ibid.* 1896-23 (6 June 1896), 89; F.C. Fleischer, ‘Het openbare kerkelijke gebed’, *Ibid.* 1898-33 (13 August 1898), 131-132; W. Zaalberg, ‘Christelijke beginselen en levenspraktijk’, *Ibid.* 1899-05 (4 February 1899), 17-18; ‘God in ons’, *Ibid.* 1908-23 (6 June 1908), 177-178; P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., ‘Een vroom pantheïst’, *Ibid.* 1910-10 (5 March 1910), 74-75; [H. de Lang], ‘Redactioneel – Het persoonlijk geweten en de bestaande ordeningen’, *Ibid.* 1916-09 (26 February 1916), 71-72; [F.L. Ortt], ‘Voor de week – Ons geweten en de liefdedrang’, *Ibid.* 1916-38 (16 September 1916), 321-322; J. van Rees-van Nauta Lemke, ‘De stem God’s in ons geweten’, *Ibid.* 1920-02 (17 January 1920), 5-6; H. Oort, ‘Hoofdartikel – Doe nimmer iets tegen uw geweten’, *Ibid.* 1921-26 (2 July 1921), 201-203; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, ‘Hoofdartikel – Heilige Geest’, *Ibid.* 1922-22 (3 June 1922), 169-171; H.T. de Graaf, *Godsdienst en zedelijkheid. Rede, uitgesproken bij de aanvaarding van het ambt van het bijzonder hoogleeraar vanwege het Haagsch Genootschap ter Verdediging van den Christelijken Godsdienst, te Utrecht op 8 October 1924* (Arnhem 1924), 29; P. Elderling, ‘Vrijheid en waarheid’, *De Hervorming* 1926-46 (13 November 1926), 364-365; H. Behrns, ‘Het geweten’, *Ibid.* 1926-52 (25 December 1926), 410-411.

science. The importance modernists attached to freedom of conscience, the protection of which they, as chapter 3 has shown, considered their most important identity marker, is shown by, among other things, the initial name given to the NPB, '*Gewetensvrijheid*' ('Freedom of Conscience').

This is not to say that modernists thought that the human conscience always worked 'as it should' in each individual case.³⁵ Far from it – just as there was much concern in modernist circles about the level of piety in Dutch society, there was also much concern about the level of public morality and behaviour. Someone's conscience could 'go astray' if it was not 'developed' enough, or if the interplay of intellect, heart, and conscience was not optimal. Someone with orthodox and hence, from a modernist point of view, intellectually 'less' developed conceptions of God, for example, might find his conscience calling him to deny people with other convictions the right to freely profess their faith.³⁶ In that case, intolerance was seen as conscientiousness, because of a misunderstanding of what 'piety' was. Moreover, not everyone had the ability to listen to, and act in accordance with, the voice of conscience. Two reasons were responsible for this. First, because morality was intertwined with intelligence and piety, not everyone was equally capable of separating 'ethical' from 'unethical' behaviour. Second, and often in combination with the first reason, the voice of conscience could be 'drowned out', or 'silenced' by, for example, alcohol abuse (causing an individual to lose self-control), widespread extenuation of lawlessness (a persistent double moral standard in sexual matters), or inappropriate literature.

These influences, extraneously affecting an individual's sense of morality, could give people the impression that certain behaviour was 'acceptable', when in fact it was not. In the modernist movement, many voices were therefore raised against excessive consumption of alcohol and prostitution. Moreover, as shown in chapter 8, contemporary highly acclaimed novels were not infre-

35 Exemplary in this respect is what J. Herderscheë wrote in 1888: every human being has the same conscience, as the voice of conscience is the voice of God. Yet, differences in moral development and ignorance hinder some from listening to this voice. "For that reason, it is a duty to take this ignorance away, [...] to [bring people's moral development] more and more into accordance with that of the best of our generation." Quoted from: J. Herderscheë, 'Het geweten', *De Hervorming* 1888-12 (24 March 1888), 45-46, here 46.

36 E.g.: [Ph.R. Hugenholtz in:] W. de Meijer, 'Open brief aan ds. Ph.R. Hugenholtz', *Ibid.* 1875-03 (21 January 1875), 1-2; [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'De synode der Ned. Herv. Kerk in 1878', *Ibid.* 1878-37 (14 September 1878), 2; [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'Binnenland – Aanmatiging in de Ned. Herv. Kerk', *Ibid.* 1883-24 (16 June 1883), 94; 'Binnenland – De Ned. Herv. Kerk en de proponentenformule', *Ibid.* 1884-02 (12 January 1884), 7; 'Berichten, enz. – Orthodoxe arrogantie officieel aangemoedigd', *Ibid.* 1903-32 (8 August 1903), 252-253.

quently subjected to fierce criticism. After all, although aesthetics – composition, originality, vocabulary, and character description – were seen as an important aspect of literature, modernist critics tended to ultimately base their opinion of a book on its moral content. If its protagonists lacked piety and a conscientious attitude to life, or if its author did not have the intention of edifying his readership, a book generally received a negative review in *De Hervorming*. Contrary to naturalistic depictions and the morally unstable, wicked, or irreligious personages found in (some of) the works of contemporary belletterists, people should not be exposed to obscenity, just as they needed role models who took life seriously (who had *levensernst*) and to act according to the *zedelijk plichtsbesef* (ethical sense of duty) resonating in their conscience.

Describing those with the highest level of spiritual development as ‘aristocrats’ is completely in line with the ‘vernacular’ of modernists themselves.³⁷ As several examples may illustrate, the word ‘aristocrat’ had a positive connotation in modernist circles. When L.W.E. Rauwenhoff died in 1889, the Lutheran minister M.J. Mees (1846-1894) wrote:

In his appearance, the organisation of his household, his studies and his taste, [Rauwenhoff] showed himself to be, above all, a man of refinement and cultivation. He had an inborn dislike of all that is blunt, rough, and ill-mannered. He was an aristocrat in the good sense of the word, who had an eye and a heart for the sublime and the beautiful in externals and, most of all, in principles of life.³⁸

Similarly, Ph.R. Hugenholtz, who died in the same year, was commemorated in *De Hervorming* as “an aristocrat of the spirit [. . .], who was fully aware of, and has wholeheartedly enjoyed, the spiritual riches he possessed.”³⁹ In obituaries dedicated to them in 1897 and 1919 respectively, A.D. Loman and J. van Loenen Martinet were characterised as ‘spiritual aristocrats’ as well.⁴⁰ Many more examples could be given, to show that the word ‘aristocrat’ was used in a positive way over a long period of time and by modernists of all kinds of persuasions. As late as 1916, the socialist modernist magazine *De Blijde Wereld* stated that

37 Zaalberg used the term as early as 1874. See: Zaalberg, *De Nederlandsche Protestantenvond*, 6.

38 M.J. Mees, ‘Binnenland – L.W.E. Rauwenhoff’, *De Hervorming* 1889-05 (2 February 1889), 18.

39 [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Na de uitvaart van dr. Ph.R. Hugenholtz’, *Ibid.* 1889-21 (25 May 1889), 82.

40 S. Cramer, ‘A.D. Loman’, *Ibid.* 1897-17 (24 April 1897), 65-66, here 65; Oort, ‘Levensbericht van Johannes van Loenen Martinet’, 58-59.

a good minister should be “democratic at heart, aristocratic in spirit.”⁴¹ The term ‘spiritual aristocrat’ was used by modernists and non-modernists alike – it regularly appeared in (commemorative) articles dedicated to public figures in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century⁴² –, but only among the former did the adjective ‘spiritual’ explicitly refer to erudition, religiosity, and morality as intertwined entities in the sense described above.

Part of first-generation modernists’ optimistic, teleological, and individualistic worldviews was the belief that human society would become ever more perfect as time progressed. On the one hand, this was a matter of *perfection*: the process took place as a law of nature. On the other hand, it was a matter of *perfectibility*: the pace of the process could be increased. Because of their high level of development, ‘spiritual aristocrats’ had a crucial role to play in the endeavour to increase society’s evolution towards a perfect future state. They could help the spiritually less developed to become more pious, more learned, and more virtuous.⁴³ Society tended to be seen not as a whole that is more than the sum of its parts, but rather as a collection of individuals. If these individuals were to be brought to a higher state of being, it was generally believed that social wrongs would be extinguished and that society in its entirety would thus be ameliorated.⁴⁴

Being a ‘spiritual aristocrat’ did not have any socio-economic connotation in principle, but, in practice, it turns out that those who were considered to be ‘spiritual aristocrats’ were all materially rather well off. Likewise, the spiritually ‘less’ developed were generally less materially fortunate as well. This was an inevitable consequence of modernist thinking. After all, in order to help the less developed, one needed enough time to devote himself to social work. Only those who were not preoccupied with the daily struggle to make ends meet had the opportunity to thoroughly devote themselves to spiritual matters and to let others share in their spiritual riches. With the ‘tutorage’ of ‘spiritual aristocrats’, it was believed that the spiritually less developed could attain a higher level of ‘civilisation’. Enabling and stimulating individuals to reflect upon religious and ethical affairs, and to make conscious decisions regarding these

41 ‘Redactioneel – “Een bezwaar tegen de kerk”’, *De Hervorming* 1916-22 (27 May 1916), 184.

42 A.F. van Oudvorst, *De verbeelding van de intellectuelen. Literatuur en maatschappij van Dostojewski tot Ter Braak* (Amsterdam 1991), 206.

43 Exemplary in this respect is: ‘Brieven over socialisme’, *De Protestant* 11.23 (7 June 1884), 2-3; 11.24 (14 June 1884), 3.

44 Exemplary in this respect is what one of the editors of *De Protestant* wrote in 1886: “the most important cause [of social injustices] should be sought in individuals themselves.” Hence, permeating society with “the religion of Jesus, the spirit of Christianity” was the solution to social misery. Quoted from: ‘De socialisten’, *Ibid.* 1v.30 (24 July 1886), 3-4.

matters, would enhance the free development of religious life and the level of communal moral life.

In line with the above, those who were spiritually 'least' developed and needed to be 'tutored' most were, in practice, materially the less well off, or even destitute. Within the lowest socio-economic classes, the number of poorly educated people was highest, orthodoxy and religious indifference were both rampant, and unethical behaviours, such as bad manners, intemperance, and alcohol abuse, were believed to be more widespread in these than in other social classes. Because of the strong link existing in modernist thinking between religion and ethics, social injustices such as alcohol abuse, prostitution, and poor housekeeping, were seen as impediments to a free development of religious life, just as were clericalism and dogmatism.⁴⁵ After all, social evils were products of self-indulgence, of giving priority to matter over mind, which prevented people from being autonomous, responsible, rational, and disciplined individuals as well as from making a useful contribution to society at large. As such evils were blots on the escutcheon of a 'civilised' society, the higher classes were also responsible for exterminating these evils, primarily by giving the 'right' example to the lowest classes.⁴⁶

As the stained-glass windows of the Free Congregation in Amsterdam showed, historical persons who had proved themselves 'spiritual aristocrats' could inspire and 'teach' generations to come – because of their achievements in life, but even more because of the principles on the basis of which they had lived their lives. Living in a 'Protestant' spirit, expressed in a tolerant attitude, a commitment to the freedom of conscience, a high moral standard, and a personal faith, was characteristic of 'spiritual aristocrats'. Here, the term 'Protestant' does not imply specific religious conceptions: many claiming to

45 The following line of reasoning, which P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr. put forward in 1896, was repeatedly heard in modernist circles: because an individual could not devote all his energy to the development of his spiritual life as long as his body suffered from a disease, addiction, or indecent behaviour, the NPB, striving for the free development of religious life, should proactively try to cure bodies and souls wasting away in misery. Religious life could not flourish if someone was burdened with any sort of physical 'illness' or mental 'instability'. See: [P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr. in:] *Verslag NPB 1896*, 22.

46 E.g.: I. Hooykaas, 'Het plan eener nieuwe vertaling van het Oude Testament', *De Hervorming* 1884-43 (25 October 1884), 172; W. Zaalberg, 'Wat leest gij?', *Ibid.* 1886-49 (4 December 1886), 195-196, here 195; 'Binnenland – Eten en laten eten', *Ibid.* 1892-24 (11 June 1892), 94-95; E. Snellen, 'Bedwelming wijke!', *Ibid.* 1894-09 (3 March 1894), 33-34; 'Binnenland – Wij gaan vooruit', *Ibid.* 1894-43 (27 October 1894), 170-171; K. Vos, 'Ingezonden stukken – Repliek', *Ibid.* 1895-29 (20 July 1895), 116; A. Rutgers van der Loeff, 'Over onze inwendige zending', *Ibid.* 1897-11 (13 March 1897), 41-42; C.S.K., 'Godsdienst en maatschappij – Uit een achterbuurt', *Ibid.* 1923-06 (10 February 1923), 44-45, here 45.

be Protestants, such as self-proclaimed defenders of sixteenth-century dogmas, lacked a Protestant spirit. In turn, others, who never saw themselves as such, had in fact been 'Protestants' in a spiritual sense. P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr. – to refer to an example already used in chapter 2 – therefore claimed in all sincerity that Buddha, Socrates, and Francis of Assisi had been just as 'Protestant' as Luther or Theodore Parker.⁴⁷ As liberal Protestantism was an offshoot of Christianity, its adherents looked at the originator of Christianity as a 'tutor' *par excellence*. A clear indication thereof is modernists' practice of calling Jesus 'the Master' with a capital 'M'.⁴⁸ Although particularly first-generation modernists and their old-school modernist descendants did this, modernists unanimously saw Jesus as their principal example. Whether they took him to be the son of a Galilean carpenter, a mythicized rabbi, or the reflection of the eternal Christ, modernists of different persuasions shared with each other the desire to act in accordance with Jesus's spirit and to base their behaviour in church and society on what they saw as his principles. The nineteenth-century endeavour to write 'historically accurate' biographies of Jesus, usually referred to with the German term '*Leben-Jesu-Forschung*' and being popular in liberal Protestant circles, was partly a result of this – with the goal not of mimicking Jesus's concrete actions,⁴⁹ but of distilling his religious and ethical ideals out of the stories told about him in the Gospels.⁵⁰

Unlike the term 'spiritual aristocrat', the term 'tutor' or 'tutorage' was not part of the modernist vernacular. It is nonetheless, in combination with, and as an addition to, 'spiritual aristocrat', the best term to characterise the content of modernist discourse, since it has three connotations that directly relate to modernist thinking regarding the acceleration of the pace of progress. First, 'tutors' are exemplary persons. 'Spiritual aristocrats' were destined for the fulfilment of this role: they had a duty to be shining examples to the spiritually less developed so as to uplift these individuals. Second, the word 'tutorage' lays emphasis on learning: 'spiritual aristocrats' were 'teachers', from whom

47 [P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr.], 'Ons Allerheiligen', *De Hervorming* 1898-45 (5 November 1898), 179-180.

48 A good, introductory summary of liberal Protestant research on the historical Jesus is given in: F. Dijkema, 'De Christus des geloofs en de Jezus der historie', *De Gids* LXXXVI (1922), 94-120.

49 This was a crucial difference between modernists and early *evangelischen* such as Hofstede de Groot: the latter did believe in the possibility, and necessity, of conforming oneself to God ("*gelijkvormig aan God*") as reflected in the biblical image of Jesus. See, e.g.: P. Hofstede de Groot, *De zaligheid in Jezus Christus door God aan het menschdom gegeven. Twaalf leerredenen* (Groningen 1854), 50-51.

50 Schweitzer, *Von Reimarus zu Wrede*; M. Casey, *Jesus of Nazareth. An Independent Historian's Account of His Life and Teaching* (London and New York 2010), 1-59.

the spiritually less developed could learn in cognitive, religious, and ethical matters. Third, a 'tutor' is someone who gives *personal* guidance. This element of one-on-one contact was fundamental to modernist thinking.

In practice, a 'spiritual aristocrat' could only be a bourgeois liberal Protestant. Modernists were convinced that they had the most reasonable, most plausible ideas about God – ideas that were not dictated by, but still compatible with, contemporary scientific and scholarly knowledge. Moreover, because they felt that they had the deepest understanding of what 'piety' truly was, and that they upheld high ethical principles, they believed that they had a vocation to assume a 'tutoring' role in church and society. The next two sections illustrate the consequences of this thinking, expressed with the terms 'spiritual aristocrats' and 'tutoring' – both in the sphere of the church, taking discussions on lay preaching as a case study, and in society, focusing on the controversy over district nursing.

3 Liberal Protestant Discourse in the Context of the Church: The Case of Lay Preaching

As argued in previous chapters, notwithstanding dominant anti-ecclesial voices in the early modernist movement, no radically new forms that might have replaced church life had come into being in the movement.⁵¹ Most liberal Protestants belonged to the Dutch Reformed Church and only a minority of them took the decision to join the Free Congregation or the Remonstrant Brotherhood, or to be an NPB member without having church membership at the same time. *Volkskerk*-minded Reformed liberals felt that the Dutch Reformed Church should replace its old church order with one in which doctrinal freedom would be formally and unequivocally recognised, but the institution itself had too much value to be dismantled. To justify this reasoning, they used the discourse of the spiritual aristocracy of tutors. In a heterogeneous church denomination, modernists and orthodox could not completely isolate themselves – even if the bonds that kept them together were purely administrative, they still had to relate to each other in some way or another. Personal contact between modernists and orthodox would thus continue to be necessary. What

51 According to H.U. Meyboom, modernist laypeople would continue to feel the need to go to church as long as no new form of religious community was found. See: H.U. Meyboom, 'Welke waarde heeft de theologische wetenschap voor het godsdienstig leven van onzen tijd?', *De Hervorming* 1899-30 (29 July 1899), 125.

is more, personal contact should be encouraged, as it was of vital importance for orthodoxy's own development and hence for the advancement of a free development of religious life. In both these regards, orthodox Protestants needed to be liberated from the dogmatic chains they bound them. Only in encounters with modernists, the 'spiritual aristocrats' in the realm of church and theology, would the orthodox be confronted with 'higher' conceptions of God as well as with a 'higher' understanding of piety and morality – notions of which they would otherwise be deprived. Without such encounters, orthodox Protestants would never come to realise that their spiritual development was nipped in the bud by outdated beliefs and practices.⁵² In other words, for their own sake, they could not do without modernists' 'tutelage'.

In the modernist movement, the church not only continued to be seen as the natural embodiment of communal religious life; as mentioned, ecclesial vocabulary, symbols, and rituals continued to be preferred to new forms. Experiments with religious services were limited to the abolition of baptism and the Lord's Supper, and this only (temporarily) occurred in a small number of congregations. Next to such (fruitless) calls for ceremonial or liturgical reforms, pleas for lay preaching could be heard in the modernist movement as well. Yet just as with ceremonial reforms, laymen-led religious services in church congregations and even in NPB branches never truly got off the ground. The discursive practice of the spiritual aristocracy of tutors was responsible for this turn of affairs.

In early 1878, in an article in which he gave account of his objectives as the editor-in-chief of *De Hervorming*, F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr. stated his hope that "among us, it will be out of the question to speak of 'clergymen' [as opposed to] 'laypeople'."⁵³ Eighteen years later, J. Herderscheê believed that this hope had indeed come true; resolutely, he clearly perceived that modernists "reject [...] the distinction between clergymen and laypeople."⁵⁴ Although it might seem that Herderscheê had some reason to assume this, as laypeople were stimulated in modernism to be involved in theological and church-related discussions, his perception was in fact a *misperception*. There continued to be a differentiation within the modernist movement between 'clergymen', who had completed academic theological study and been ordained as ministers, and 'laypeople'.

52 E.g.: Eerdmans, *Het recht der vrijzinnigen*, 26-27; Eerdmans, 'Pro', 15-18.

53 [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'Iets over ons blad en de behoeften waaraan het te voldoen heeft', *De Hervorming* 1878-02 (12 January 1878), 1. See also: [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'De Hervormingsdag', *Ibid.* 1878-43 (26 October 1878), 1-2, here 1.

54 J. Herderscheê, 'Verborg en openbaar', *Ibid.* 1896-29 (18 July 1896), 113.

As early as 1873, the Dutch Reformed minister C. Cammenga (1826-1889), writing under the pseudonym 'Agathophilus' ('he who loves intrinsic goodness'), addressed the issue of lay preaching.⁵⁵ He was prompted to do so by an article in *De Standaard*, in which Abraham Kuyper, paraphrased by Cammenga, had recommended lay preaching as a remedy for the factional struggle in the Dutch Reformed Church. Granting laymen the right to lead religious services would give factional minorities in local congregations the opportunity to organise their own services, when confronted with a shortage of ordained, theologically trained ministers.⁵⁶ Before giving his own opinion on the matter, Cammenga gave a brief overview of the practice of lay preaching in the history of Christianity. In the church of Corinth in Pauline times, lay preaching had been the rule. In the early church in general, laymen – laywomen were supposed to be silent – had freedom to take the church floor and to more or less spontaneously sermonise whenever they felt a sudden inspiration to do so. Among sixteenth-century Anabaptists, whose 'spiritual enthusiasm' was equal to that of the earliest Christians, lay preaching had also been the rule. Yet other Protestants, such as Lutherans and Calvinists, had recoiled from this. In spite of the Protestant principle of the 'priesthood of all believers' (meaning that those who lead religious services do not have exclusive access to the realm of God), the distinction between clergymen and laypeople continued to exist after the Reformation. Even in their clothing, the former were distinguished from the latter – because, in Cammenga's words, "people wanted this, the faithful did not want to see their preachers wearing 'a merchant's costume'." Particularly in the Dutch Reformed Church, "numerous ecclesial regulations have secured the pulpit with lock and key against irregular usurpation."⁵⁷

Cammenga himself was not unfavourably disposed towards lay preaching. The practice would put an end to the problem of vacant pulpits at once and would facilitate factional minorities to organise their own services within the existing framework of the Dutch Reformed Church. He did not see why a layman's sermon would be less edifying than a sermon written by a minister,

55 A. de Kempnaer, *Vermomde Nederlandsche en Vlaamsche schrijvers. Vervolg op Mr. J.I. Doorninck's vermomde en naamlooze schrijvers* (Amsterdam [1928] 1970), 12. In this publication, his name is spelled as 'Camminga'.

56 Agathophilus [C. Cammenga], 'Leeken-preek', *De Hervorming* 1873-35 (28 August 1873), 2-3, here 2. In the first years after the *Doleantie*, lay preaching did occasionally happen in the church community grouped around Kuyper due to a shortage of ordained, theologically trained ministers. See: Reitsma, *Geschiedenis van de Hervorming en de Hervormde Kerk der Nederlanden*, 431.

57 Agathophilus [C. Cammenga], 'Leeken-preek', *De Hervorming* 1873-35 (28 August 1873), 2-3, here 2.

solely because the former lacked the latter's training and ordination. Nevertheless, Cammenga felt that lay preaching could only be a *temporary* measure. Church councils should have the right to create and to abolish lay-led services at any time to avert disorder. Even more important, lay-led services should not be seen as the ideal, "because any and all churches should appreciate able and scholarly as well as permanently appointed pastors, who can completely devote themselves to meeting the spiritual needs of [their] congregation."⁵⁸

Reactions to his article were mixed. Ex-minister W. Zaalberg reminded Cammenga of the fact that a group of church councils in the north-eastern part of Friesland had already made a formal plea for the legalisation of lay preaching at the Dutch Reformed synod several years before. Zaalberg referred here to the synod of 1868, during which, in his cynical account, "the Very Reverend Gentlemen of the Synod could hardly preserve their official dignity, when the request [for lay preaching, ТК] came up for consideration and the proposal was rapidly stowed away in the sepulchre of other ecclesial absurdities."⁵⁹ The request had been rejected, as it was believed that lay preaching was inconsistent with the history of the Dutch Reformed Church – laymen had never been allowed to lead religious services –, that it would inevitably lead to turmoil and confusion, and that it did not contribute to "true congregational development and edification." Moreover, the synodal commission feared that lay preaching would further undermine the significance of the academic training of ministers-to-be, which was already endangered, as the government was thinking about eliminating theological faculties at state universities.⁶⁰ However, the petitioners from Friesland felt that there were several good reasons to introduce lay preaching: it would free the Dutch Reformed Church once and for all from the 'Roman Catholic leaven' that the Reformation had not entirely eliminated, it would take some work off ordained ministers' shoulders, and would increase the involvement of the flock with church life.⁶¹ It could, moreover, placate factional quarrels and would not lead to more turbulence if it were strictly regulated. According to Zaalberg, Cammenga simply reiterated the previous arguments and did not bring up any new ones. Yet, by reintroducing the issue of lay preaching into public debate, Cammenga and Kuyper

58 Agathophilus [C. Cammenga], 'Leeken-preek', *De Hervorming* 1873-35 (28 August 1873), 2-3, here 3.

59 W. Zaalberg, "'t Kan verkeeren!", *Ibid.* 1873-36 (4 September 1873), 3.

60 *Handelingen NHK* 1868, 72-74.

61 *Ibid.*, 72-73. See also: *Verhandeling van ring Bergum over "opwekkingen van het godsdienstig gemeentelieven door middel van leekenprediking"*, NL-HtBHC, Familie Van Heusden, 325, inv.nr. 128.

showed that this issue was still up for consideration in both modernist and orthodox circles. Zaalberg hoped that their doing so would prompt the synod to consider the matter once again, as the arguments in favour of lay preaching were, in his opinion, still valid.⁶²

The Dutch Reformed minister A.C.J. van der Kemp (1838-1899) took a more reserved position than Zaalberg. The shortage of ministers primarily affected congregations in rural areas. Van der Kemp was not very impressed by many of his countrymen's level of civilisation and was convinced that they "would generally prefer uncivilised men as preachers." Services in Secessionist congregations, during which farmers read centuries-old, ultra-dogmatic fire-and-brimstone sermons, he contended, showed the veracity of this conviction. If the Dutch Reformed Church adopted Secessionist practices, he asked rhetorically, "would the civilised segment of the congregation not become more aloof from the church than it already is, and is it not exactly our vocation to infuse this segment of the congregation with love and sympathy for the church as much as we can?" Van der Kemp thus feared that lay preaching would bring men with a lack of refinement into the pulpit. Yet he did not reject Cammenga's plea altogether. Men "who have acquired an academic degree," albeit not a degree in theology, and who thus evidently possessed high intellectual capacities, should be granted access to the pulpit – not so much to solve the problem of vacant pulpits, but rather to give a boost to religious life: "learned members of the congregation, men with a clear mind and a heart for religion, [...] can make those who have become estranged from religion see that religion is not a 'police measure' [the only value of which is to secure civil order, *TK*], but an indelible need of true humanity." As preachers, such learned men would be good examples to the entire congregation.⁶³

Cammenga's plea did not have any immediate consequences, but the discussion on lay preaching would nonetheless flare up again several times after 1873. Particularly in the mid-1880s and mid-1890s, it was brought up in NPB circles. F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr., for example, noted in 1885 that until then, the need for lay preachers had not really been felt in the modernist movement. After all, modern theologians were 'laymen' themselves, as they were no longer viewed as "official interpreters of divine prophecy." Yet, when necessary, non-theologians should be welcomed into the pulpit. That is to say, "lay peasants' preaching will not be met with appreciation in our circles. But apart from that, there is nothing to preclude a man of culture from serving among us as a

62 W. Zaalberg, "'t Kan verkeeren!'", *De Hervorming* 1873-36 (4 September 1873), 3.

63 A.C.J. van der Kemp, 'Leekenpreek', *Ibid.* 1873-37 (11 September 1873), 2.

preacher.”⁶⁴ Twelve years later, to take another example, someone who signed himself ‘a democrat, also in the field of religion’ sharply criticised the NPB branch in Schiedam for vainly asking fourteen different ministers to deliver a sermon without even thinking about the possibility of lay preaching. “When shall we reach the point,” he lamented, in applying his criticism to the NPB as a whole, “that not only fourteen different ministers, but also, at least in a specific situation, a sincerely religious individual who is not a minister will be approached to lead a religious service.”⁶⁵

In the 1920s, lay preaching was an important item on the modernist agenda. In 1921, G.A. de Ridder (1890-1970), at the time one of the leading Reformed liberals in Amsterdam, argued that laymen could assist ministers in preaching once in a while.⁶⁶ Three years later, he proposed that lay preaching could give Reformed liberals in urban areas the opportunity to hold church services of their own more often. Simultaneously, however, De Ridder suggested that lay preaching should only be tried in exceptional circumstances, as he feared that it would be accompanied by mimicry, dilettantism, and vanity. If a layman wanted to preach during a religious service, he should avoid imitating ministerial mannerisms, not enter “a field that is not his, for example theology as exegesis and dogmatics,” and have the ability to give clear, well-considered, and eloquent verbal expression to his innermost religious feelings. A layman should understand that greater demands were made regarding a sermon than a lecture. In his own words, De Ridder could not conceal his doubts as to whether a layman could meet these demands.⁶⁷

At the same time, lay preaching was hotly debated among Remonstrants. In 1861, the general assembly of the Remonstrant Brotherhood had adopted a new church order in which access to the pulpit was recognised as the exclusive prerogative of academically trained theologians. According to the minister N. Blokker (1885-1975), who gave an historical overview of the Remonstrant discussion on lay preaching in a 1929 article, this was done in response to

64 [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘Vraagbus’, *De Hervorming* 1885-07 (14 February 1885), 28. See also: [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘Veertiende algemeene vergadering van den Nederl. Protestantenbond’, *Ibid.* 1884-46 (15 November 1884), 183-185, here 183.

65 Een democraat ook op godsdienstig gebied, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1897-48 (27 November 1897), 191. See also: ‘Nederlandsche Protestantenbond – Uit Schiedam’, *Ibid.* 1897-46 (13 November 1897), 183.

66 [G.A. de Ridder in:] ‘Kerknieuws – Kansel-amateurs’, *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* LXXVIII.269 (26 September 1921), morning paper A, 3.

67 [G.A. de Ridder in:] ‘Kerknieuws – Leekepreeken?’, *Algemeen Handelsblad* xcvii.31418 (25 August 1924), evening paper, 9. See also: [G.A. de Ridder in:] J.J. Meyer, ‘Kerknieuws – Leekepreeken’, *Het Vaderland* (4 September 1924), morning paper, 4.

a minority that wanted to open Remonstrant pulpits to theological students who had not yet fully completed their studies. In 1900, the general assembly had reconfirmed its exclusion of non-theologians from Remonstrant pulpits by stating that teachers of religion did not have the right to lead church services.⁶⁸ Now, for the first time in 1920 and again in 1929, the minister P. Eldering advocated the establishment of a 'lay order of worship' as the consequent implementation of the Protestant principle of the priesthood of all believers. If laypeople could say an edifying word at non-church meetings with a religious character why, he wondered, should they be excluded from the pulpit?⁶⁹

Eldering's questioning of the persistent distinction in modernist circles between ministers or theologians on the one hand, and laypeople on the other, seems to be understandable. After all, reforming organised religious life, including congregational practices of worship, was what the modernist movement claimed to strive for. Moreover, he was not alone with his questions. In 1913, H.G. Cannegieter Dzn. accused the modernist movement of being unfaithful to its own agenda of ecclesial reform: "this enduring distance between theologian and layperson [is] a rather peculiar phenomenon in the modern era."⁷⁰ More than a decade later, S.H.N. Gorter echoed Cannegieter in deploring that "it is a deeply sad sign that a religious service cannot be thought of without a minister in our circles."⁷¹ Yet the persistence with which the distinction between ministers and laypeople was preserved is not as astonishing as it seemed. An analysis of the arguments against lay preaching, arguments with which the grand majority of modernists apparently agreed, demonstrates that it was a straightforward consequence of modernist thinking.

What is striking in Van der Kemp's already-mentioned response to Cammenga's 1873 article is that he did not want men with a low standard of culture and outmoded ideas about God on the pulpit, as indicated by his dislike of Secessionist 'peasant preaching', and that he emphasized that a preacher should have an academic degree and "a clear mind and a heart for religion." In other words, only intelligent, pious, and cultivated men – opening the office of minister to women had not yet been considered – were eligible to ascent the pulpit. Because of these characteristics, a preacher was fit to be an example

68 [N. Blokker in:] 'Kerknieuws – De Remonstrantsche kansel', *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* LXXXVI.134 (15 May 1929), morning paper C, 2.

69 [P. Eldering in:] 'Kerknieuws – Algemeene vergadering der Remonstrantsche Broederschap', *Ibid.* LXXXVI.152 (3 June 1929), evening paper D, 2.

70 H.G. Cannegieter, 'De noodzakelijkheid van zelfkritiek voor het bestaan der kerkgenootschappen', *De Hervorming* 1913-48 (29 November 1913), 382-383, here 383.

71 [S.H.N. Gorter in:] 'Kerknieuws – De Remonstrantsche kansel', *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* LXXXVI.134 (15 May 1929), morning paper C, 2.

to many. In all arguments opposing, or severely restricting, lay preaching, this emphasis on the supposedly higher spiritual development of ministers was the *Leitmotiv*. Ideally, a preacher should be a 'prophet', a spiritual guide who could express what was going on in his inner life and give this a more general significance in such a way that he inspired others and contributed to the cognitive, devotional, and ethical development of those others. A preacher's words and actions should foster character building within his congregation. In order to be a 'prophet', one thus had to be able to set the standard. Again and again, it was implied that a completed theological training guaranteed that someone had the capacities necessary to lead a congregation.

During a discussion at the meeting of modernist ministers in the northern provinces of 1879, for instance, the remark was made that although no modernist would deny being anticlerical, modernist laypeople were still more inclined to accept words spoken by a minister than by fellow laymen. A minister was apparently seen as authoritative because of the office he exercised. Furthermore, because of his profession, for which homiletic skills were required, a minister could usually speak better in public than could laypeople.⁷² In 1895, H. Oort stated that cultured laymen should be allowed to deliver sermons, but only sermons *written by theologians*. He thereby indicated that in order to say something sensible about the Unseen – and to express this in such a way that others could make sense of it –, theological study was needed.⁷³ Two years later, J. van Loenen Martinet implied his agreement with Oort by writing that "in general, we give preference to graduates, also regarding the leadership of religious services."⁷⁴ Because biblical times were different from the present day, B.D. Eerdmans subsequently argued in 1913, "it is very difficult for a layperson to understand the edifying and religious [truths contained] in [the Bible] without any explanation."⁷⁵ Laypeople simply could not do without theologians' guidance. In M.C. van Mourik Broekman's perception, laypeople themselves tended to concur with Eerdmans's conviction. In early 1918, he noticed that in laypeople's eyes, "theology seems to be a peculiar discipline, accessible for insiders only."⁷⁶

72 [H. Koekebakker in:] 'Binnenland – Herder en leraar', *De Hervorming* 1879-28 (12 July 1879), 116.

73 H. Oort, 'Preek-lezen', *Ibid.* 1895-18 (4 May 1895), 70.

74 [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Ingezonden stukken', *Ibid.* 1897-48 (27 November 1897), 191.

75 B.D. Eerdmans, 'Ingezonden stukken – De Protestantenbond-Bijbel', *Ibid.* 1913-03 (18 January 1913), 23.

76 M.C. van Mourik Broekman, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Theologie', *Ibid.* 1918-04 (26 January 1918), 13-14, here 13. Van Mourik Broekman actually used the word

In the years after the First World War, when the debate on lay preaching intensified, the supposedly higher spiritual development of ministers continued to be the dominant argument with which laypeople were denied (full) access to the pulpit. De Ridder, for example, used the argument in support of his view that lay preachers should only be called to the pulpit in exceptional cases and only in a supporting role next to the minister.⁷⁷ The belief that the status of minister was a guarantee of homiletic quality was stronger in modernist circles than the need for lay preachers.⁷⁸ It was hard to miss, as a journalist in the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* commented in 1921, how ineradicable “the idea [among modernists] is that giving a religious speech should remain the task of a professional.” This journalist recognised that modernists automatically assumed that a layman was spiritually less developed than a minister. Moreover, he thought that the lack of wide support for lay preaching in the modernist movement also had to do with a latent awe for the office of minister. Even if a lay preacher were to be introduced as a ‘minister’, without ordination he would never be as authoritative as an ordained minister.⁷⁹ In a 1924 commentary, J.J. Meyer sharply stated the majority modernist opinion on lay preaching by reiterating Van der Kemp’s denigration of ultra-orthodox practices of worship: “the lower the spiritual development of a congregation is, the higher the desire to be led by a lay preacher will be.”⁸⁰ That same year, the Dutch Reformed minister F.E. van Santen (1876-1966) also argued that a minister was more capable of preaching than a layman, albeit not exclusively, given

‘aristocrat’ when describing what a good preacher should be. In his opinion, “the best should rule. The spiritually noble person should lead his follow men.” See: M.C. van Mourik Broekman, ‘Hoofdartikelen – Dominus’, *Ibid.* 1916-29 (15 July 1916), 242-243, here 242. In a 1925 article in *De Stroom*, he explicitly linked spiritual development to socio-economic class. See: M.C. van Mourik Broekman, ‘Maatschappelijk leven – De dominé en de standen’, *De Stroom* IV.14 (14 March 1925), 2. A decade later, Van Mourik Broekman argued that lay preaching was not something desirable, as ministers were ‘spiritual aristocrats’ by profession and hence most fit to lead a congregation. In his eyes, being an ordained minister guaranteed that someone had the character, expertise, and skills to edify others. See: M.C. van Mourik Broekman, *Het geestelijk leiderschap van den predikant* (Lochem [1936]), esp. 14-16.

77 [G.A. de Ridder in:] ‘Kerknieuws – Kansel-amateurs’, *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* LXXVIII.269 (28 September 1921), morning paper A, 3.

78 E.g.: ‘Kerknieuws – De Remonstrantsche kansel’, *Ibid.* LXXXVI.134 (15 May 1929), morning paper C, 2.

79 ‘Kerknieuws – Kansel-amateurs’, *Ibid.* LXXVIII.269 (28 September 1921), morning paper A, 3.

80 J.J. Meyer, ‘Kerknieuws – Leekepreken’, *Het Vaderland* (4 September 1924), morning paper, 4.

the latter's lack of theological training. A minister was attached to a congregation and therefore personally knew the people to whom he was preaching, which Van Santen deemed necessary to present the Gospel truths as understandably as possible. Moreover, by becoming a minister, one showed that he felt the need to bring people closer to God, a need without which a sermon could not truly be a testimony of faith. In his assumption that a minister was spiritually more developed than a layman, Van Santen thus emphasised the aspect of piety encompassed by the word 'spiritual'.⁸¹

Related to the issue of whether laypeople should continue to be excluded from the pulpit or not was the discussion surrounding the admittance of laypeople to meetings of modern theologians. In this case also, the distinction between those with and without theological training was maintained because of the former's supposedly higher spiritual development. After several appeals that laypeople be admitted to the annual meeting of modern theologians in Amsterdam, an experiment with lay presence took place in 1871. That year and the following year, the meeting's executive board invited several laymen as lecturers, and accepted two laymen in its midst. As early as 1873, however, the role of laymen was reduced to that of listeners. A year later, the experiment came to a permanent end. As A. Kuenen noted in a historical overview of the meeting's first twenty-five years, wiping away the distinction between theologians and non-theologians had not proved satisfactory. Reflecting upon, and contributing to, theological discussions with enough expertise was deemed too difficult for laypeople. Still, Kuenen admitted that it could be advantageous once in a while to hear what laypeople had to say about theological issues, "but it will not do, in order to profit from this advantage every now and then, to throw our workplace open to them and to tempt them to enter it."⁸² Other meetings of modernist theologians and ministers, such as the one organised in the three northernmost provinces of the Netherlands, did not have an unrestricted admittance policy either. The general feeling in this matter among modernists was articulated in 1893 by P. van der Meulen (1866-1958), a liberal Reformed tax inspector who would gain fame as an ardent, socialist-oriented advocate of teetotalism: it is not proper, he argued, for a layman to interfere in a theological discussion.⁸³ In spite of the modernist self-image as a totally egalitarian community, the difference between theologians and laypeople, deemed out-

81 F.E. van Santen, 'Hoofdartikel – Leekepreeken', *De Hervorming* 1924-45 (8 November 1924), 353-355.

82 Kuenen, *Gedachtenisrede*, 18.

83 P. van der Meulen, 'Ingezonden stukken', *De Hervorming* 1893-26 (1 July 1893), 103.

moded particularly in the early modernist movement, thus continued to be maintained.⁸⁴

Of course, orthodox Protestants would certainly not deny that a minister should be bright, devout, and well-mannered. However, modernists undoubtedly had more qualms about lay preaching than orthodox Protestants had. In the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, for example, lay preaching was authorised, albeit severely restricted. Preachers were expected to have studied at either the Theological Seminary in Kampen or the theological faculty of the Free University in Amsterdam, but in exceptional cases, regional church councils could give a layman, who was called a *lerend ouderling* or *oefenaar*, the right to conduct Sunday services in a particular congregation for a fixed period of time.⁸⁵ Moreover, the eighth article of the church order of the Reformed Churches allowed a layman to become an ordained minister without academic theological training if showed himself to possess *singuliere gaven* (exceptional, God-given talents).⁸⁶ The existence of such a 'back entrance' to the pulpit had to do with the fact that in the Reformed Churches ministers were not preferred over lay preachers because of their level of education as such, but rather because of their ordination. In neo-Calvinist thinking, a congregation could only be led by a man who had been ordained as a minister by ordained ministers.⁸⁷ With some imagination, this could be seen as the Calvinist variant of the Roman Catholic principle of apostolic succession. Theological training was also important, but mainly in order to ensure that a future minister had a profound knowledge of church dogmas, so as to prevent him from leading his congregation away from divine Truth.⁸⁸ In some Secessionist circles, after 1907 primarily concentrated

84 With those modernists who incorporated Spiritist or Theosophical elements in their liberal Protestant outlook, the notion of the 'spiritual aristocracy' took on an esoteric dimension: in their eyes, 'spiritual aristocrats' were those who had been initiated into a divine secret, or had been endowed with knowledge that was hidden from others, and only these 'clairvoyants' were therefore in a position to tutor others in raising their level of spiritual development.

85 H. Bouwman, *Gereformeerd kerkrecht* (Kampen 1928), 364-465; H. Florijn, 'De verdwenen oefenaar', *Oude Paden* x1.4 (December 2006), 30-35, here 34-35.

86 Bouwman, *Gereformeerd kerkrecht*, 434-439.

87 [F.W. Grosheide in:] 'Uit het kerkelijk leven – Gebrek aan predikanten', *De Waarheids-vriend* x11.40 (2 September 1921), 2; 'Kerknieuws – Kansel-amateurs', *Ibid.* LXXVIII.269 (28 September 1921), morning paper A, 3.

88 A layman who wished to become a minister because of *singuliere gaven* therefore had to pass, just like theology students, a dogmatic exam by the council of the region where he went to church, and, after being called to a congregation, another exam by the regional council to which that congregation belonged.

within the *Gereformeerde Gemeenten* (Reformed Congregations), lay preaching was looked upon even more favourably – more than that, it was the rule. In this community, ministers-to-be were instructed by ministers who had not been academically trained themselves either. The adage was that a preacher should have gained his knowledge directly from God (*‘van God geleerd’*) – meaning that God should have personally revealed the biblical truths to this man’s inner self, which could be ‘examined’ by those who already felt certain about their own election –, rather than through academic theological study (*‘godgeleerd’*).⁸⁹

The point here is that in modernist circles, in spite of the ubiquitous rhetoric of reform, the general reluctance to give laypeople access to the pulpit was a hindrance to an internal reorganisation of church life: religious services continued to be structured along ‘traditional’ role patterns, with the congregation being an audience of listeners. Becoming and being a minister was not a matter of vocation in the sense that someone was ‘elected’ by God to preach his Word, as it was in orthodoxy, but a matter of spiritual development – it required being highly-educated, strongly aware of, and thankful for, divine presence in the world, and cultured. To be a (modernist) minister in itself proved that someone possessed all three elements of high spiritual development – knowledge, free piety, and ethics –, whereas being a layman did not guarantee this. For leading a religious service, however, there had to be certainty about the possession of these elements, otherwise a service could not serve its intended purpose.

By virtue of their profession, ministers were thus seen as ‘spiritual aristocrats’ and the obvious persons to take leadership in the sphere of worship.⁹⁰ Since in modernist circles religion was believed to be at the root of *every* significant contemporary issue, ministers’ guidance extended to other spheres as well. *De Hervorming* may serve as a perfect illustration of this: although it specifically claimed to be a ‘general’ opinion magazine, the bulk of its articles, including those on social affairs, were written by theologians and ministers.⁹¹

89 Van Eijnatten and Van Lieburg, *Nederlandse religiegeschiedenis*, 225.

90 As Noordhoff concludes, ‘leadership’ in modernist circles was legitimised on the basis of *begaafdheid* (aptitude) and *prestaties* (achievements). See: W.R.M. Noordhoff, *Het godsdienstig gemeenschapsleven in het Nederlandsch vrijzinnig protestantisme. Een sociaal-psychologische studie* (Lochem 1933), 45. The relationship between ministers and laypeople in modernist circles was hence not as egalitarian as Bos believes; a distinction between the two continued to exist. Cf.: Bos, *Servants of the Kingdom*, 281.

91 See also: Krijger, ‘Een vrijzinnige “meneer”’, 54–57. Hoenderdaal also notes that liberal Protestant church and organisational life were dominated by ‘strong personalities’.

4 Liberal Protestant Discourse in the Context of Society: The Case of District Nursing

In modernist circles, worship was meant to both experience and express meta-physical emotions, and to contribute to character building; religious services and religious education should ideally help people develop plausible conceptions of God, realise the ideal of 'free piety', and lead morally virtuous lives. The goal of social work, aimed at relieving the poor and needy, should be character building as well. Those who lacked self-discipline or a stable environment should be helped in such a way that they would become independent beings – that is, individuals who were not 'slaves' of dogmas, the bottle, carnal desires, and bad habits, or who no longer run the risk of becoming such 'slaves', and who were no longer hindered in their process of spiritual self-realisation. As said before, alcohol abuse and prostitution, for example, were seen as severe impediments to this process. The characters of orphans and neglected children, to give another example, needed to be strengthened with the help of high-minded persons, to prevent them from ending up in the gutter. There was no consensus in the modernist movement *how* the autonomy of the individual could best be strengthened among people in need. In the case of alcohol consumption, some modernists called for moderation, while others pleaded for the prohibition of ardent spirits, and yet others went as far as to advocate teetotalism, sometimes as an element of a politically socialist orientation or a lifestyle that also included vegetarianism.⁹² In the case of prostitution, some argued from a medical perspective that the best way to combat

who were all without exception ministers. He states that liberal Protestantism as such totally relied on ministers. See: Hoenderdaal, 'Het vrijzinnig protestantisme tussen de schaduwen van gisteren en morgen', 174-175, 289; K. Douwes, 'Eerder gids dan aanvoerder. Het vrijzinnig leiderschap van Hendrik Tjakko de Graaf (1875-1930)', *Documentatieblad voor de Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis na 1800* XXXVII.81 (December 2014), 40-60, here 47-48.

- 92 E.g.: H.K., Jr., 'Billijk?', *De Hervorming* 1880-28 (10 July 1880), 110; E.J.W. Koch, 'De strijd tegen den drankduivel', *Ibid.* 1886-49 (4 December 1886), 196-197; E. Snellen, 'Wees een zegen', *Ibid.* 1888-46 (17 November 1888), 181-182; E.J.W. Koch, 'Beslist optreden', *Ibid.* 1889-20 (18 May 1889), 78; I. Hooykaas, Jr., 'Ingezonden stukken – Geheelonthouding', *Ibid.* 1892-12 (19 March 1892), 48; P. van der Meulen, 'Geheelonthouding', *Ibid.* 1892-16 (16 April 1892), 61-62; 1892-17 (23 April 1892), 66-67; E. Snellen, 'Bedwelming wijke!', *Ibid.* 1894-09 (3 March 1894), 33-34; P. van der Meulen, 'Ingezonden stukken – Een tegenstelling?', *Ibid.* 1895-50 (14 December 1895), 199-200; A. de Koe, *Het beginsel der onthouding* (s.l. 1896); P. van der Meulen, *Bier als volksdrank* (s.l. 1896); Pl. van den Berg and A.W. van Wijk, 'Maatschappelijke belangen', *Ibid.* 1899-14 (8 April 1899), 53-54; C.J.A. Bosch, 'Ingezonden stukken – Waarom geheelonthouding?', *Ibid.* 1899-43 (28 October 1899), 180; Censor [A. Carlier], 'Ingezonden stukken – Geheelonthouding', *Ibid.* 1899-51 (23 December 1899), 211; A.W. van

prostitution was strong regulation. Others, taking a legalistic point of view, felt that regulation was not powerful enough to condemn the intrinsic evil of prostitution, and asserted that it should be made a criminal act, even if this meant that prostitution went completely underground, with all the potential health risks and exploitation that this involved.⁹³ Regarding the care of children who, for any reason whatsoever, could not live with their parents, there was lively debate among modernists as to whether a foster home or a foster institution was the best environment for these children to be raised in. The discussion became heated to such an extent that the modernist *Vereeniging tot steun van verwaarloosden en gevallen* (Association for the Support of the Uncared-For and Fallen Women), which had been founded in 1887 and aimed to find foster homes for children in need, came up against an alternative, i.e. the *Vereeniging voor vrijzinnige tehuizen* (Association for Liberal Protestant Foster Institutions) in 1911, which was based on the conviction that orphans, ill-treated children, and youthful miscreants were better off in foster institutions.⁹⁴ However, notwithstanding all differences of opinion as to which types

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- Wijk, *De drinkdwang in de samenleving* (s.l. 1899); F.L. Ortt, *Rein Leven en geheelonthouding* (Amersfoort 1903); A.W. van Wijk, 'Pro', in: A.W. van Wijk and G. Oosterbaan, *Geheelonthouding* (Baarn 1905), 1-20; M.C. van Wijhe, *Bezwaren tegen geheelonthouding weerlegd* (Utrecht 1909); M. van Leeuwen Pz., 'Ingezonden stukken – Volkspetitionement voor "plaatselijke keuze"', *De Hervorming* 1913-48 (29 November 1913), 385-386.
- 93 E.g.: [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'Binnenland', *Ibid.* 1878-22 (1 June 1878), 3; 1878-23 (8 June 1878), 2-3; E.J.W. Koch, 'Binnenland – Beziel en bezielend', *Ibid.* 1881-03 (22 January 1881), 10; [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'Binnenland – Het congres van de Vereeniging tegen de prostitutie', *Ibid.* 1883-40 (6 October 1883), 158-159; G.J.D. Mounier, *De prostitutie-quaestie. Bedenkingen en opmerkingen naar aanleiding van het behandelde in de vergadering van moderne godgeleerden, gehouden te Amsterdam op 28 en 29 April 1883* (Utrecht 1883); 'Onze leestafel – "De zoogenaamde prostitutie-regeling te Utrecht"', *De Hervorming* 1884-13 (29 March 1884), 53; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Het nationaal congres tegen de prostitutie', *Ibid.* 1889-18 (4 May 1889), 70-71; C.G. Chavannes, 'Binnenland', *Ibid.* 1898-47 (19 November 1898), 189; G.J.D. Mounier, *Eenige stellingen in zake de reglementeering der prostitutie* (Utrecht 1907).
- 94 E.g.: 'Weezenverpleging', *De Protestant* 11.24 (14 June 1884), 2-3; 11.26 (28 June 1884), 3; 'Vereeniging van weesvaders', *Ibid.* 11.28 (12 July 1884), 2; 'Nog iets over weezenverpleging', *Ibid.* 11.32 (9 August 1884), 2-3; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Op een kruissprong', *De Hervorming* 1896-20 (16 May 1896), 78-79; A.C.J. van der Kemp, A. Carlier and L. Knappert, 'Ingezonden stukken – Vereeniging tot steun van verwaarloosden en gevallen', *Ibid.* 1896-24 (13 June 1896), 96; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Berichten, enz. – Gezinsverpleging', *Ibid.* 1904-10 (5 March 1904), 76; A. Snellen, 'Berichten, enz. – Het tehuizenplan', *Ibid.* 1910-53 (31 December 1910), 419-420; 'Binnenland – Vereeniging voor vrijzinnige tehuizen', *Algemeen Handelsblad* LXXXIV.26774 (27 October 1911), morning paper, 1; F.H.G. van Iterson, 'Ingezonden stukken – Vrijzinnige tehuizen', *De Hervorming* 1912-40 (5 October 1912), 322.

of social work most contributed to character building, modernists agreed that social work was only salutary if it was *gezonde filantropie* (wholesome humanitarianism).⁹⁵

With the term '*gezonde filantropie*', in use particularly before 1900, modernists meant that the goal of social work should be to give people in need a clear insight into the way their lives could be improved, and to deepen their moral sense. Ideally, it should also make people more pious, but modernists were divided on the question of how implicit or explicit the relationship between religion and social work had to be. Chapter 7 deals with this matter in more detail. Here, it is sufficient to note that the adjective 'wholesome' implied that there also was an 'unwholesome' kind of humanitarianism. This included all forms of welfare work that did not help the poor and needy to attain individual autonomy, but instead kept them in a position of dependency on others.⁹⁶ This did not mean that modernists believed that social misery, be it poverty or illness due to wrongful behaviour, was solely someone's own fault, but that the primary end of social work was to teach someone how to deal with his misery, in an effort to improve his condition. At the same time, the general public should be persuaded to no longer tolerate exploitation of manual labourers, excessive consumption of alcoholic beverages, and frequenting of houses of ill fame. Although different levels of state intervention in social affairs were advocated within the modernist movement, especially since the gradual rise of politically socialist modernists as of the 1890s, modernists generally favoured private enterprise. Helping the poor and needy should be the expression of

95 E.g.: M.E. van der Meulen, 'Gezonde filantropie – Stichtingen te Bolsward', *De Hervorming* 1879-49 (6 December 1879), 195-196; J.G. Hintzen, 'Gezonde filantropie', *Ibid.* 1879-50 (13 December 1879), 200; 1879-51 (20 December 1879), 203-204; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Armenzorg', *Ibid.* 1886-05 (30 January 1886), 17-18; [P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr. in:] 'De 21^e Ned. Protestantendag', *Ibid.* 1893-45 (11 November 1893), 177-178, here 178; E. Snellen, 'Gemeenteleven', *Ibid.* 1894-19 (11 May 1894), 74; L. Knappert, 'Vriendelijkheid', *Ibid.* 1896-39 (26 September 1896), 153-154, here 153; 'Berichten, enz. – Sentimenteele liefdadigheid', *Ibid.* 1900-34 (25 August 1900), 259-260; A.J. Adriani, 'De nieuwe armenwet', *Ibid.* 1912-12 (23 March 1912), 89-90.

96 E.g.: [J.W. Liefstinck in:] 'Binnenland – De vergadering van moderne predikanten uit de noordelijke provinciën', *Ibid.* 1881-28 (16 July 1881), 110-111; W. Zaalberg, 'Christendom en socialisme', *Ibid.* 1885-09 (28 February 1885), 33-34; 'Binnenland – Armenverpleging', *Ibid.* 1885-17 (25 April 1885), 66-67; H.U. Meyboom, *Socialisme* (Amsterdam 1888), 68; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Kosteloze voeding', *De Hervorming* 1889-05 (2 February 1889), 19; Observator, 'Maatschappelijke vraagstukken', *Ibid.* 1890-48 (29 November 1890), 190; H.U. Meyboom, *Armenzorg* (Ouderkerk [1891]); 'Binnenland – Verkeerde filantropie', *De Hervorming* 1898-25 (18 June 1898), 100; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Bondswijkverpleging', *Ibid.* 1898-32 (6 August 1898), 127.

social consciousness, of an intrinsic heartfelt urge on the part of those who were in a position to help. If social welfare was not a concern of voluntary associations of citizens, the politically liberal-oriented majority of modernists feared that people would have a perverse incentive to shirk their moral, civil duty as individuals to be of service to society.⁹⁷

As already mentioned in relation to alcoholism, prostitution, and the care of orphans and neglected children, modernists gave different answers to the questions of how social work should be organised and whether the NPB had a social responsibility to fulfil. On the issue of district nursing, emerging in the 1890s, things were no different. Some modernists held that district nursing was not a task for a religious association to take up, whereas others felt that it provided the NPB with the opportunity to expand the scope of its activities outside of church life. All the same, the value of district nursing was widely recognised in NPB circles – the discussion on district nursing solely revolved around the question of whether this, and social work in general, should be conducted under the auspices of the national NPB. An analysis of this discussion reveals that the arguments put forward were imbued with the discourse of the spiritual aristocracy of tutors.

The issue of district nursing was first addressed in the modernist movement in late 1891. In an article in *De Hervorming*, Van Loenen Martinet suggested that local NPB branches follow the example of a residents' association in Arnhem, which tried to care for sick locals of limited means in their own homes and to take some weight off their family members' shoulders.⁹⁸ Shortly thereafter, the NPB in Rotterdam organised a meeting in which the local board member P.R. Mees (1849-1931) proposed that it should be a task of the NPB to promote nursing of the sick as a matter of general concern. Moreover, he expressed the view that nursing was "an excellent sphere of action for the cultured woman."⁹⁹

97 E.g.: [H. Goeman Borgesius in:] 'Onze Protestantendag', *De Hervorming* 1886-46 (13 November 1886), 183-184; Meyboom, *Socialisme*, 45-46; 'Waar onze taak ligt', *De Hervorming* 1890-04 (25 January 1890), 13-14; 'Binnenland – Hoornsche predikantenvereeniging', *Ibid.* 1890-45 (8 November 1890), 179; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Diaconale fondsen', *Ibid.* 1899-23 (10 June 1899), 97; J. de Louter, 'Antwoord aan mr. F.C.M. Boenders', *Ibid.* 1925-02 (10 January 1925), 12. An early plea for state involvement with poor relief is found in: F.P.J. Sibmacher Zijnen, 'Geen philanthropie alléén', *Ibid.* 1893-15 (8 April 1893), 57-58; 1893-16 (22 April 1893), 62.

98 [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Klarendal te Arnhem', *Ibid.* 1891-45 (7 November 1891), 181.

99 [P.R. Mees in:] 'Nederlandsche Protestantenbond – Afdeeling Rotterdam', *Ibid.* 1891-48 (28 November 1891), 192. E.C. Knappert expressed herself in similar terms in: *De taak van de vrouw in den Nederlandschen Protestantenbond. Rede, gehouden op den Protestantendag te Kampen, 26 October 1892* (Amsterdam 1892), 14.

In January 1892, several women from The Hague informed the readership of *De Hervorming* that they had recently established an association for the advancement of district nursing. According to them, what was more significant than providing a suitable field of activity for cultured women was that district nursing would bring the poor into personal contact with the well-to-do.¹⁰⁰ E.C. Knappert, who was committed to increasing modernists' involvement with social work, expressed herself in similar terms in an 1896 article. Community centre-based work in which working-class women came into contact with women from higher social classes had already proved how much good influence the latter could exert on the former. District nursing could infuse this influence directly into family life.¹⁰¹

The principal aim of district nursing, as the women from The Hague argued in their 1892 article, was not only to cure the sick, but, even more important, to "contribute to the cancellation, indeed the prevention of moral misery." A district nurse should possess "extraordinary gifts of mind and heart" and should be "cultured in the true sense. Her contact with everyone has to be beneficent, she has to be the intermediary between the more and the less privileged in our society."¹⁰² An article that was published in April 1892 explained in further detail how the association in The Hague tried to link the treatment of physical misery to the prevention of moral misery: "[it] wants to trace and suppress the causes of illness, such as unhealthy houses, filthiness, indecency, and social injustices, and by so doing, it not only wants to take care of the sick, but also of the healthy, who need advice and support."¹⁰³ A couple of years later, after several NPB branches had decided to organise district nursing themselves,¹⁰⁴ W. Zaalberg noted that many modernists indeed believed

that the nurse should not only be someone who cures a suffering body, but also the darkened, ill, suffering mind. Each time, her work will put

100 'Binnenland – Wijkverpleging', *De Hervorming* 1892-01 (2 January 1892), 3.

101 E.C. Knappert, 'Wijkverpleging, uitgaande van den Nederlandschen Protestantenvond', *Maandblad voor Ziekenverpleging* v1.6 (15 February 1896), 87-89, here 88.

102 'Binnenland – Wijkverpleging', *De Hervorming* 1892-01 (2 January 1892), 3.

103 'Binnenland – Uit 's-Gravenhage', *Ibid.* 1892-16 (16 April 1892), 63.

104 In her study on the history of district nursing in the Netherlands, Stolk-van Delen mentions that Zwolle was the first NPB branch to organise this kind of social work in 1894, followed by the branches in Amsterdam, Deventer, Rotterdam, Arnhem, 's-Hertogenbosch, Leiden, and Schiedam. See: H.W. Stolk-van Delen, *Wijkverpleging in historisch perspectief. Ontstaan en ontwikkeling van de wijkverpleging (1890-ca. 1930) met aandacht voor aspecten van medicalisering en professionalisering* (Amsterdam 1983), 11. In addition, the branch in Haarlem was also involved in district nursing.

her in contact with patients in need of moral support, consolation, encouragement, [patients] in need of deliverance from frightful fear, fear of mind that is provoked by a religious disposition wrapped in superstition, prejudice, and error – which oftentimes causes more suffering than bodily pain. It is thought that [the district nurse] could alleviate the religiously oppressed inner life of these [patients] with her word – her stimulating, liberating, rescuing word, not as a propagandist, but out of pity for a constricted soul. It is believed that she could recognise yearning for God in the most peculiar forms, and, in connection with that [form], that she could say grace and pray an edifying word of her own on behalf of, and together with, the sick.¹⁰⁵

In meeting these expectations, everything came down to the personality of the nurse: she could only uplift the poor by advancing their spiritual development if she was spiritually developed enough herself.¹⁰⁶ Her main task was to build up character in order for the needy to ameliorate the quality of their lives. According to some, district nursing was therefore an activity upon which the NPB should embark, as it would advance the free development of religious life. The then NPB pastor F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Jr. (1868–1924), for example, chided NPB members who were against the incorporation of social work into the framework of the NPB for having a very limited understanding of what ‘religion’ is. “After all,” he asserted, “this work in itself, nursing the sick in their own homes and consequently safeguarding domestic happiness, is religious work, even if religion is never explicitly mentioned during it.”¹⁰⁷ Just like his uncle P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., he believed that social reform had become more urgent than ecclesial-theological transformation, and that district nursing, putting as it did the ideal of ‘free piety’ into practice, contributed to the infusion of the highest religious and ethical principles, as championed by modernism, in modern society.¹⁰⁸

However, as already mentioned in Zaalberg’s quote, district nursing should not be used as an instrument of propaganda. The NPB should neither see it as a means to make ‘converts’ nor primarily as a way to realise its own goals. District

105 W. Zaalberg, ‘Bondswijkverpleging’, *De Hervorming* 1898–33 (13 August 1898), 132.

106 See also: Censor [A. Carlier], ‘Maatschappelijke belangen’, *Ibid.* 1898–40 (1 October 1898), 160; [I. van den Bergh in:] *Verslag NPB* 1894, 35.

107 F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Jr., ‘Maatschappelijke belangen – De bond en wijkverpleging’, *De Hervorming* 1898–39 (24 September 1898), 156.

108 *Ibid.*; [P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr. in:] ‘Nederlandsche Protestantenbond – Afd. Haarlem’, *Ibid.* 1894–10 (10 March 1894), 38.

nursing would give modernists access to the homes of the sick poor, but, as explained in chapter 7, their homes should only be entered out of religious compassion for the unfortunate poor and not out of the desire to 'evangelise' among them. The contribution that district nursing could make to spiritual development was solely in the personal contact between the nurse and the sick. As the secretary of the NPB branch in Haarlem made clear, nurses "have to be pious women, who understand that the sickbed is not the proper place to discuss religious differences [and] win admiration for their religious view of life because of the work they do and the way in which they conduct it."¹⁰⁹ It was hoped that the nurse's character would inspire the sick poor and help them to gain insight into the way they themselves could contribute to the alleviation of their own misery – if it did not increase the ability of the sick poor to cope on their own, district nursing will have failed¹¹⁰ –, as well as to enhance their moral sense, and to advance their relationship with God. The nurse's influence was, first and foremost, to quote the secretary of the NPB branch in Zwolle, a 'silent' one: "not only her advice, but just her personal presence in itself had a good influence on the spirit of the families she has visited. Cleanliness and discipline are spontaneously created."¹¹¹

To recapitulate, in this brief overview of arguments put forward in the modernist discussion on district nursing, several aspects stand out. District nursing was meant to help the sick poor by bringing them into personal contact with a woman from – and hence with the thoughts, beliefs, and norms of – a higher social class. Being well off in a material respect was seen as completely synonymous with being spiritually more developed than a low-class person. As argued before, this supposed equation might have to do with the idea that people with a working-class background had never had either the incentives or the means (time, money) for self-development, as well as with the bourgeois character of liberal Protestantism. In any case, it manifests the strong class-consciousness with which modernist thinking was imbued. It was hoped that in the contact between the 'well-to-do' and the 'less fortunate', the spirit

109 'Nederlandsche Protestantenbond – Afd. Haarlem', *De Hervorming* 1894-10 (10 March 1894), 38. In a later report on district nursing in the Haarlem branch of the NPB, special emphasis was put on the influence 'cultured women' had in lower-class milieux. See: 'Binnenland – De wijkverpleging van den Protestantenbond te Haarlem', *Ibid.* 1895-26 (29 June 1895), 102-103.

110 Van Loenen Martinet repeated this in: [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Gezonde philanthropie', *Ibid.* 1899-25 (24 June 1899), 106.

111 'Nederlandsche Protestantenbond – Wijkverpleging te Zwolle', *Ibid.* 1899-03 (21 January 1899), 10.

in which the former acted would 'rain down' upon the latter, inspiring the latter to strive for an advance of their own level of spiritual development. The materially and hence spiritually gifted could help them with this. The best way to organise this 'tutelage' was in voluntary associations implementing a social welfare scheme that came to be called '*toynbeewerk*', named after the British social reformer Arnold Toynbee (1852-1883).¹¹² *Toynbeewerk* put the idea of the spiritual aristocracy of tutors into practice: it included all kinds of activities in which people who were spiritually highly developed altruistically helped lower-class people to become more 'civilised' and, in the specific case of district nursing, to empower them to take responsibility for their own wellbeing. Conducting such social work, as a manifestation of 'practical Christianity', was seen not just as a civil duty of the civilised classes, but also, and in particular, of cultured *modernist women*, in that caring and practising morality were considered to be 'female' qualities, intrinsic to the nature of women, while having a modernist philosophy of life was thought to represent the highest level of spiritual development of the time.

The rationale behind *toynbeewerk* was that it would help the poor to build character, which was seen as a prerequisite for social reform. If low-class people were given alms or more leisure time without being taught how to organise their lives in such a way that they could devote themselves to spiritual self-development, they would never learn how to do whatever they could for themselves to improve their situation. Moreover, if the government were to enforce changes in the fabric of society and take over social welfare work from private organisations, the lower classes would continue to be in a state of dependency, in this case upon the state, and the higher classes would no longer be forced to face the injustices in the structure of society themselves. As the progressive liberal H. Goeman Borgesius (1847-1917) argued, legislation and government policy should be the expression of the national 'conscience'.¹¹³ Although far from all modernists shared his party-political orientation, a majority of them reasoned along the same lines as Goeman Borgesius when it came to social reform: the conviction that certain social practices were intolerable

112 Dealing with *toynbeewerk* in his study on the history of community centres in the Netherlands, Nijenhuis notices that the driving forces behind this kind of social work all had, in one way or another, a link to the NPB. See: H. Nijenhuis, *Werk in de schaduw. Club- en buurthuizen in Nederland, 1892-1970* (Amsterdam and Utrecht 1987), 15.

113 [H. Goeman Borgesius in:] 'Onze Protestantendag', *De Hervorming* 1886-46 (13 November 1886), 183-184. See also: L.J. Wartena, *H. Goeman Borgesius (1847-1917): vader van de verzorgingsstaat. Een halve eeuw liberale en sociale politiek in Nederland* (Amsterdam 2003), esp. 107-118.

should get a firm hold in the minds of the Dutch people, and this conviction should be enshrined in legislation. The endeavour to edify the lower classes should therefore be accompanied by the attempt to raise social awareness among the higher classes.

In modernist circles, it was generally acknowledged that individual reform had to precede structural reform. From the 1890s onwards, as the next chapter illustrates, there was a (gradually growing) minority of mostly socialist-oriented modernists who did not agree. However, this minority too acknowledged that the 'social question' was, in essence, an ethical-religious question and that individual spiritual reform, be it simultaneous with or after structural changes in the fabric of society, was still needed.

5 Liberal Protestant Discourse: An Evaluation

'Aristocracy' literally means 'rule of the best'; the 'best' being those who are most able to lead due to their possession of certain characteristics (such as virtues, wisdom, ancestry, or strength of will) that others do not have, or possess only to a lesser extent.¹¹⁴ Based on an integral and systematic analysis of *De Hervorming* and other modernist periodicals that were issued between 1870 and 1940, it can be concluded that in modernist circles, a dominant discourse existed in which the notion of 'aristocracy' was central. That is to say, the notion of '*aristocraten naar de geest*' or a '*geestesaristocratie*' (a 'spiritual aristocracy') was implicitly operative in liberal Protestant thinking on how the 'free development of religious life' ought to be advanced. Here, the adjective 'spiritual' includes reason, religion, and ethics. In modernist circles, the spiritually 'best' or spiritually 'most developed' were generally believed to be the most fit to set the pace in both church and society. To phrase it in terms borrowed from the French sociologist and philosopher Pierre Bourdieu – who distinguishes different forms of 'capital' (economic, social, cultural, symbolic), on the accumulation and monopolisation of which status and power relations in society are based –, liberal Protestant discourse had as its underlying principle that those having the most *spiritual* capital are the ones who should set

114 In Ancient Greece, birth had soon become the defining criterion of aristocracy. See: A.J.L. Waskey, Jr., 'Aristocracy', in: N. Wilson (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Ancient Greece* (New York and London [2006] 2010), 95–96. This was not the case with regard to 'spiritual aristocrats'. However, children born into modernist families did have an 'advantage' over others, as they were socialised in a 'spiritual aristocratic' milieu and hence had a good prospect of developing into 'spiritual aristocrats' themselves.

an example for those with less spiritual capital, and thereby 'assist' the latter in realising their full spiritual potential. Next to 'capital', 'field' is another concept that Bourdieu uses in his social theory; with it, he refers to any setting having its own specific inner logic and requiring a specific 'habitus' or code of conduct, in which differences in capital between individuals determine the social hierarchy. It depends on the purpose or *raison d'être* of a particular field who are most fit to set the tone in this field.¹¹⁵

The church and social work have been used in this chapter as examples of fields in a 'Bourdieuian' sense. As articulated in liberal Protestant discourse, individuals with academic theological training *and* an ecclesial ordination were considered to be the only ones capable of playing first fiddle in the field of the church; their profession 'showed' that they possessed the spiritual capital necessary to fulfil the purpose of this field, that is, edifying and fortifying the Christian community of faith. As expressed in this same discourse, unmarried women were believed to have the most spiritual capital in the field of social work, as I illustrated in this chapter with the case of district nursing; having a 'maternal' inclination, 'intrinsic' to her female nature, to improve the morals of her neighbours while not being a mother herself, an unmarried woman could best fulfil the purpose of social work, that is, caring for the poor and needy, and helping them in becoming less dependent on others. Beyond this, however, liberal Protestant discourse implied that in all fields, *modernists* possessed the most spiritual capital. After all, reason, religion, and ethics – the three components united in the adjective 'spiritual' – were regarded as inextricably interrelated in modernist circles. For a 'correct' understanding of piety, one had to have reasonable ideas about God and reality. In turn, a correct understanding of piety was needed to know what true morality entailed. In modernist eyes, liberal Protestantism had the deepest understanding of Christianity, and *hence* also of piety, and *hence* also of morality.

Although the forms of capital that he discerns are autonomous entities, Bourdieu admits that they are interconnected and not entirely equivalent. In fact, "economic capital," he argues, "is at the root of all other types of capital," which he even characterises as "transformed, disguised forms of economic capital."¹¹⁶ As the sociologist D.L. Swartz, a leading interpreter of Bourdieu's social theory, explains,

115 Of course, this is only a very brief, simplified paraphrase of Bourdieu's thoughts on 'capital', 'fields', and 'habitus'. Bourdieu laid the theoretical foundations for his social theory in: P.F. Bourdieu, *La distinction. Critique sociale du jugement* (Paris 1979); *Le sens pratique* (Paris 1980).

116 P.F. Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital', in: J.G. Richardson (ed.), *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (New York 1986), 242–258, here 252.

it is after all economic capital that makes possible the investment in cultural capital by making possible the investment of time needed to accumulate cultural capital. [...] In general, economic capital appears to convert more easily into cultural capital and social capital than vice versa. [...] Thus, while culture and social networks are forms of capital, they are not exactly on equal footing with money and property.¹¹⁷

With regard to spiritual capital, things were no different. 'Spiritual aristocrats', those having the most spiritual capital, did not necessarily have to be in a comfortable socio-economic position in theory, but in practice, for the reason mentioned in the above quote, they could only be bourgeois. In working-class families, who were preoccupied with earning their daily bread, there was neither the time nor the money to invest in spiritual development and thus to accumulate spiritual capital on their own. In developing themselves spiritually (and as such improving their quality of life), working-class people had to be 'tutored' by those who had more spiritual capital, and, consequently, were higher up on the social ladder, than they themselves were. As implied in the discourse of a spiritual aristocracy of tutors, the idea was that personal contact between someone with a bourgeois background and someone belonging to a lower class would be beneficial to the latter. This applied not only to the field of social work (coming clearly to the fore in the examples mentioned above), but also, implicitly, to the field of the church. After all, there was a class aspect to *volkskerk*-minded modernists' argument that modernists should stay in the Dutch Reformed Church in order to expose orthodoxy to their good influence: at least in public perception, orthodox Protestants were considered to be mostly *petty* bourgeois.¹¹⁸ It would be wrong, let alone unfair, to say that modernists were aspiring after social hegemony – on the contrary, an in-depth analysis of the liberal Protestant press can only lead to the conclusion that there was much genuine concern for the lower classes among modernists –, but the application of modernist discourse was class-reinforcing nonetheless. After all, the 'tutelage' by a 'spiritual aristocrat' basically came down to upholding the values, ideals, and life style of the upper bourgeoisie as an example to the lower classes – and the orthodox *petty* bourgeoisie as well. As such, it was closely related to the late nineteenth-century bourgeois 'civilising offensive', expounded upon in chapter 9.

117 D.L. Swartz, *Culture and Power. The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu* (Chicago and London 1997), 80.

118 Cf.: Hendriks, *De emancipatie van de gereformeerden*, 108.

Aristocrats can only take the lead if they have the power to do so, and if their authority is widely accepted by others. This applied to ‘*spiritual* aristocrats’ as well: in order to help others in attaining a higher level of spiritual development, their self-appointed spiritual ‘tutelage’ had to be accepted, which in turn required that those others regarded their values, worldview, philosophy of life, and lifestyle as prestigious or at least as worthy of appropriation. Yet, as of the 1870s, it became less and less feasible for modernists to exercise their tutelage as ‘spiritual aristocrats’. Both in the emerging socialist labour movement and among the ‘intellectuals’ who set the pace in cultural life, bourgeois culture received anything but praise, and modernist discourse was recognised as being essentially bourgeois. In addition, Roman Catholics and neo-Calvinists – the last of whom in particular cherished a self-image as petty-bourgeois *kleine luyden* and an image of liberal bourgeois culture as ‘elitist’ – constructed institutionalised subcultures of their own, ‘arming’ themselves against external influence and exercising more and more power themselves. Moreover, the feeling that liberal Protestantism was not assessed at its true value among liberal politicians, who gave expression to bourgeois culture in the political arena, intensified within the modernist movement towards the end of the nineteenth century. The next three chapters, constituting the fourth part of this study, deal with these matters at length.

PART 4

Christianising Modern Society: Socio-cultural and Political Life



Conquering the Lower Classes

1 What Now?

For the occasion of the annual meeting of delegates of the Anti-Revolutionary Party on 2 May 1918, Abraham Kuyper wrote what turned out to be one of his last public speeches. Due to severe illness, his confidant A.W.F. Idenburg (1861-1935) had to read it on his behalf. The thesis of the speech, intriguingly titled '*Wat nu?*' ('*What Now?*'), was that the ARP had to reinvent itself. Of the three big 'issues' that had dominated national politics and society from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, two had recently been resolved. First, the 'school struggle', which had been the major preoccupation and initially even the *raison d'être* of the ARP and other political parties that were based on religious principles, had come to completion in 1917 with an agreement by liberals, socialists, and confessionalists to treat denominational and public schools on an equal footing. Second, the controversy over general enfranchisement had come to an end in 1917 as well, when the right to vote and the right to stand for representative political bodies was granted to all Dutch males and the right to be elected was given to all Dutch females (women would receive the right to vote two years later). Only the 'social question' had still not been satisfactorily settled. Kuyper therefore urged his fellow party members to make this their main priority. Although he did not offer concrete suggestions, he did feel that it was necessary to resolve the social question as soon as possible.¹ In his view, a total disruption of society was imminent.²

Interestingly, the modernist movement had been confronted with the question 'What now?' several decades before. Strikingly, in modernist circles, the same answer as Kuyper's had been given to this question.

- 1 A. Kuyper, *Wat nu? Rede ter opening van de deputatenvergadering, gehouden te Utrecht op 2 mei 1918* (Kampen 1918). See also: B. van Kaam, *Parade der mannenbroeders. Protestants leven in Nederland 1918-1938* (Wageningen [1964]), 14-21; J.P. Stoop, "Om het volvoeren van een christelijke staatkunde". *De Anti-Revolutionaire Partij in het interbellum* (Hilversum 2001), 18-20.
- 2 This was no imaginary fear: Dutch socialist leader P.J. Troelstra would actually proclaim a revolution in November 1918. However, because large-scale civil unrest could be nipped in the bud, this proclamation came to be known as 'Troelstra's mistake'. See: J.S. Wijne, *De 'vergissing' van Troelstra* (Hilversum 1999).

At the 1879 NPB assembly, the chairman A. Kuenen declared that the NPB was entering a new phase: since its founding in 1870, the Dutch League of Protestants had managed to build up its organisation and to gain a footing in many municipalities. What should it do now? According to Kuenen, the time had come to focus on an intensification and extension of its activities. He did not disclose exactly *which* activities he was thinking about.³ However, in an 1880 article in *De Hervorming*, H.Ph. de Kanter suggested that one of the lecturers who had given a speech after Kuenen, the law professor and honorary president of the 1879 meeting J.T. Buys (1826-1893), had shown the NPB the route it had to take. Averting that general enfranchisement was just a matter of time and arguing that democracy could only avoid social disorder if citizens were spiritually developed enough to recognise and to serve the common good, Buys had urged the NPB to become “a big social force, striving for the sovereign power and the laws of morality.”⁴ Because, as De Kanter believed, it was not realistic to expect that the Dutch Reformed Church would continue to provide the NPB with as many members as in the 1870s, Buys rightfully urged the NPB to shift its attention from the ecclesial to the social domain.⁵ The association should, De Kanter emphasised, “involve itself in the major social issues of today.” Illustrating what he meant, he called on the NPB to actively take part in discussions on the prevention of alcohol abuse, to press political liberals not to neglect religion as a force for reform, to examine whether the recent revisions of the penal and civil codes contributed to the advancement of civilisation, and to concern itself with improving the quality of primary education.⁶

Also urging the NPB to switch its focus from church to society, J. van Loenen Martinet more explicitly called for the eradication of inequalities and troubles plaguing capitalist, industrialised modern society in 1883. “Our regulations,” he exclaimed, “speak about religious life in every sphere. How many needs are there in the society, to which we belong, that require alleviation! How many evils call for a cure! How many wrongs need to be eliminated!”⁷ At the 1886

3 [A. Kuenen in: F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘Negende algemeene vergadering van den Nederlandschen Protestantenvond’, *De Hervorming* 1879-45 (8 November 1879), 177-178, here 177; [A. Kuenen in:] *Verslag NPB 1879* (Amsterdam 1879), 6-7, here 7.

4 [J.T. Buys in: F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘Zevende Protestantendag’, *De Hervorming* 1879-45 (8 November 1879), 178.

5 H.Ph. de Kanter, ‘Twee voorzitters’, *Ibid.* 1880-15 (10 April 1880), 57-59.

6 H.Ph. de Kanter, ‘Twee voorzitters’, *Ibid.* 1880-16 (17 April 1880), 61-62, here 61.

7 Meyboom, *De Nederlandsche Protestantenvond*, 8. It remains unclear on which occasion Van Loenen Martinet said this. Neither in *De Hervorming*, nor in the official report of the 1883 annual NPB meeting is this quote mentioned.

annual NPB meeting, Goeman Borgesius even urged the NPB to strike at the very fabric of contemporary society: “the League of Protestants [...] aims to permeate society from within with an invigorating spirit, which is impossible if it does not penetrate to the root of evil, if it does not openly fight against rotten conditions, which are an indictment of the Christian stance for which it strives.”⁸ Goeman Borgesius pointed out that a fierce class struggle was being waged in Europe and acknowledged that political socialism tried everything it could to relieve the poor. However, socialism was not the right remedy for existing social malpractices: “from a religious-ethical point of view, it is hard to determine which evil is worse: the old economic system with its idolisation of self-interest, or socialism with its idolisation of the all-controlling oppressive state.”⁹ During that same meeting, the Mennonite minister J.W. van der Linden (1846-1923) gave a speech with a purport similar to that of Goeman Borgesius’s lecture. He too recognised “the noble core of socialism” with its heartfelt intolerance of social injustice, and exhorted the NPB to help to bring about a solution of the ‘social question’, in order “to avert social upheaval [...] [or] national disaster” and “to lead the impending storm of social-democratic demands into a safe and calm channel or to contribute to that.”¹⁰

The social activities the NPB (attempted to) set up, and politically socialist as well as communist sympathies within the modernist movement, have already been discussed by scholars. In a chapter in the 2014 volume *Het vrijzinnige web*, for example, C.M. van Driel deals with the ‘Commission for Social Interests’ that the national NPB established in 1887. Although he tends to explain the creation of this commission too narrowly within the context of left-wing liberals and their relationship with the NPB, thereby failing to recognise that the wish to make the NPB more socially active was shared by many members with diverse political persuasions and connected to the NPB’s incessant endeavour to create a distinct profile for itself, Van Driel correctly notes that the NPB had difficulty in taking concrete social initiatives because such initiatives easily became politicised.¹¹ In the same volume, H. Noordegraaf, who has

8 Meyboom, *De Nederlandsche Protestantenvbond*, 8; H. Goeman Borgesius, ‘De Ned. Protestantenvbond en zijne roeping tegenover de sociale kwestie’, in: C.J. Sickesz et al., *Het maatschappelijk vraagstuk beschouwd uit het oogpunt van het godsdienstig-zedelijk leven* (Amsterdam 1887), 22-58, here 57.

9 *Ibid.*, 46.

10 J.W. van der Linden, ‘De Ned. Protestantenvbond en zijne roeping tegenover de sociale kwestie’, in: Sickesz et al., *Het maatschappelijk vraagstuk*, 59-74, here 63, 65, 69.

11 C.M. van Driel, ‘Hand in hand? De gecompliceerde verhouding tussen vrijzinnig-protestanten en politiek liberalen’, in: *Het vrijzinnige web*, 103-139.

dedicated several biographies to so-called '*rode dominees*' ('red ministers'), illustrates how much resistance political socialists encountered within the modernist movement.¹² This chapter does not concern itself with social initiatives created under the auspices of the NPB or socialist sympathies existing among modernists as such. Rather, it seeks to explain *why* the organised modernist movement never managed to become a major social force, both in terms of influence and appeal. It does so, not by pointing to a lack of organisation or internal consensus within the modernist movement, but instead by looking at the consequences modernist discourse had for modernists' relationship with the socialist labour movement.

2 The Social Question and the NPB

The 'social question', an umbrella term encompassing all the negative effects of industrialisation on the living and working conditions of workers and the tensions these brought about in society, was not entirely absent from the NPB agenda in the 1870s. In 1874, for instance, the NPB branch in The Hague touched upon it while discussing the book *The True History of Joshua Davidson*. *De Hervorming* had recently published a Dutch translation of this book in serial form, accompanied by the warning that Mosselmans and Van Gilse, the then editors-in-chief of *De Hervorming*, were reluctant to present it to their readership. The anonymous author of *Joshua Davidson* let her protagonist put forward radically socialist ideas, not so much to propagate political socialism, but rather to lay bare the social incompetence of the church.¹³ In the branch in The Hague, people generally felt that the book had a negative view on Christianity and society, but welcomed it as a stimulus to intensely propagate 'pure' Christianity as a remedy for existing social evils.¹⁴ During the *Protestantendag* of 1875, P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr. and H.Ph. de Kanter hoped to start an association-wide discussion on the social question by arguing that NPB members had the duty to socially and intellectually educate and elevate

12 H. Noordegraaf, 'Water en vuur. Vrijzinnig-protestanten en socialisten vóór de Eerste Wereldoorlog', in: *Het vrijzinnige web*, 141-156.

13 In the third edition, published in 1872 only three months after the first edition, the author's name was revealed: Eliza Lynn Linton (1822-1898). See: N.F. Anderson, 'Eliza Lynn Linton. "The Rebel of the Family" (1880) and Other Novels', in: B.L. Harman and S. Meyer (eds.), *The New Nineteenth Century. Feminist Readings of Underread Victorian Fiction* (New York 1996), 117-134, here 126.

14 'Mededeelingen en berichten – Binnenland', *De Hervorming* 1874-42 (15 October 1874), 3.

individuals.¹⁵ However, an exchange of opinions failed to occur.¹⁶ Only in the 1880s did the social question gradually come to be the most hotly debated topic in NPB circles.

In spite of all the discussion on social issues and calls for action, the NPB did not actively take part in social work itself. The issue at stake was not whether NPB members acknowledged the need for, and importance of, such work. On the contrary, striving for social reform was in the genes of the modernist movement. But there was no consensus as to which activities would be most effective and most consistent with modernist principles, nor on the question of whether the NPB should organise social initiatives itself. Some, such as C.G. Chavannes, interpreted the word 'religious' in a restricted sense, arguing that a religious association such as the NPB should not concern itself with material matters.¹⁷ Others, such as Goeman Borgesius, reasoned that it was impossible to draw a rigid line between material and spiritual affairs: under the present social circumstances, spiritual development, deemed essential for social reform and connected to the NPB's aim of enabling religious life to develop in freedom, was unrealisable.¹⁸ These modernists saw it as the duty of the NPB to take a firm stand on social issues and to organise *toynbeewerk*: in the contact between the lower and higher classes, the former would be helped to improve their quality of life, whereas the latter would be confronted with lower-class misery and, so it was hoped, would gain a stronger feeling of solidarity with the lower classes.

Regarding issues on which some modernists hoped that the NPB would make a public statement, the excessive consumption of alcoholic beverages, one of the matters De Kanter referred to in his already-mentioned 1880 article, is a good illustration of the NPB's social 'incompetency'. Three weeks after

15 The social question was supposed to be discussed at the meeting in 1874, but could not be dealt with due to lack of time. See: 'Het Protestantenbond en de Protestantendag', *De Hervorming* 1874-46 (12 November 1874), 1.

16 Only two persons present felt the need to respond. A certain d'Ablaing van Giessenburg, probably the civil servant W.J. baron d'Ablaing van Giessenburg (1812-1892), could not conclude his response due to a lack of time. A certain De Haas, probably the minister D.C. de Haas (1834-1907), who represented the branch of Het Bildt during the annual NPB meeting that preceded the *Protestantendag*, said that the churches, including the NPB, were not in a position to solve the social question. After all, De Haas argued, the social question was a purely material affair, thus implying that churches could and should deal only with spiritual affairs. See: 'De derde Nederlandsche Protestantendag', *Ibid.* 1875-45 (11 November 1875), 2-3, here 3.

17 C.G. Chavannes, 'Binnenland – Jozua Davidson en J.T.', *Ibid.* 1885-38 (19 September 1885), 151.

18 Van Driel, 'Hand in hand?', 113.

De Kanter had made his appeal, Ph.R. Hugenholtz gave a response in *De Hervorming*. He agreed with De Kanter that the NPB could not remain silent about threats to public well-being and social harmony. However, he opposed the idea that the NPB should pin down all its members to one particular statement. Its only task was to stimulate its members to take part in social activities. As modernists were not necessarily of the same opinion, everyone should have free choice to decide how to shape social consciousness.¹⁹ Later that year, during the annual NPB meeting, De Kanter requested the general board of the NPB to press the government for more measures against alcohol abuse. The former Dutch Reformed minister W. de Meijer (1839-1909), who was a moderately liberal parliamentarian at the time, vehemently opposed this request. He felt that it was just a pretext for the progressive liberal De Kanter to turn the NPB into a social pressure group. P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr. repeated the objections his brother had made in *De Hervorming* several months before. As a concession, De Kanter changed his request: now, he only asked the representatives at the meeting to endorse the principle underlying his original request – that is, to agree that the NPB needed to take social work in hand. Kuenen could not go along with this. After all, even in De Kanter's amended request, it was still implied that the NPB should find *concrete* solutions to the social question. Although its then chairman R.T.H.P.L.A. van Boneval Faure (1826-1909) agreed with Kuenen and asked De Kanter to withdraw his amended request, the latter did not give in. After, as the report in *De Hervorming* has it, “many, sometimes even bitter, or at least vehement words,” the amended request was rejected “by a very tiny minority.”²⁰ This discussion proves that concretising social commitment was a delicate affair in NPB circles: the already brittle unity of the varicoloured NPB community would be imperilled if one specific opinion were to be favoured over others. Later attempts to persuade the general board of the NPB to make statements about alcoholism, prostitution or social lawmaking foundered for the same reason.²¹

19 Ph.R. Hugenholtz, ‘Nederlandsche Protestantenbond – Tweeërlei werkzaamheid’, *De Hervorming* 1880-19 (8 May 1880), 74-75.

20 ‘Tiende jaarfeest van den Nederlandschen Protestantenvbond te Deventer gevierd’, *Ibid.* 1880-45 (6 November 1880), 177-179, here 179. See also: *Verslag NPB 1880*, 43-46.

21 E.g.: ‘Binnenland – Ned. Vereeniging tegen de Prostitutie’, *De Hervorming* 1884-28 (12 July 1884), 112-113, here 113; [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘Binnenland – De Drankwet en wat wij daarvoor nog kunnen doen’, *Ibid.* 1885-13 (28 March 1885), 50; E.J.W. Koch, ‘Strijd tegen den drankduivel’, *Ibid.* 1886-49 (4 December 1886), 196-197; J. van Dam van Isselt, ‘Persoonlijke dienstplicht’, *Ibid.* 1889-42 (19 October 1889), 166-167; P. van der Meulen, ‘Geheelonthouding in de kerken in Schotland’, *Ibid.* 1892-11 (12 March 1892), 42; P. van der Meulen, ‘Geheelonthouding’, *Ibid.* 1892-17 (23 April 1892), 66-67; [J. van Loenen Martinet],

Regarding the discussions on the relationship between the NPB and *toynbeewerk*, district nursing provides an exemplary case. I have already explained why district nursing received much attention in modernist circles and why some NPB branches eagerly began to organise this kind of *toynbeewerk* themselves as of the mid-1890s. After the decision was made at the general NPB meeting of 1897 to detach district nursing from the Commission for Social Interests and to transfer it to a separate commission, a fierce controversy erupted that lasted for more than a year.²² Some interpreted the establishment of a commission solely devoted to district nursing as first and foremost a propagandistic move.²³ Moreover, coordinating district nursing explicitly under the banner of the national NPB, opponents argued, would make it impossible for those who did not want to, or who could not, join the NPB to participate. This smacked of confessionalist particularism.²⁴ Additionally, district nursing only had an intrinsic value if it was the manifestation of a *communal* heartfelt religious urge, which would not be possible if it were organised centrally. Peculiarly, it was Van Loenen Martinet who put forward this argument – oddly so, because he had been one of the biggest advocates of district nursing in NPB circles and had never expressed reservations before.²⁵ In an article in *De Hervorming* and again at the 1898 general NPB meeting, he explained himself.

In a technical exposé revolving around matters of definition and principle, Van Loenen Martinet stated that the NPB could embark upon district nursing for two reasons: as a means to advance religious life, and hence to realise the NPB's aim, or as an expression of religious life itself. Only in the latter case was district nursing exclusively treated as a good in itself. So far, only those NPB branches that functioned as genuine religious communities had set up social activities, including district nursing. In these branches, social work was done solely "because people felt the inner urge to do so, as a manifestation of their

'Binnenland – De 23^e algemeene vergadering', *Ibid.* 1893-45 (11 November 1893), 179; 'Nederlandsche Protestantenbond – Drankbestrijding', *Ibid.* 1900-47 (24 November 1900), 361-362.

22 *Verslag NPB 1897*, 26-28.

23 [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Bondswijkverpleging', *De Hervorming* 1898-32 (6 August 1898), 127; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'De bond en "maatschappelijk werk"', *Ibid.* 1898-40 (1 October 1898), 159.

24 [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Grondwetschennis', *Ibid.* 1898-34 (20 August 1898), 145; W.C. van Manen, 'De bond en wijkverpleging', *Ibid.* 1898-38 (17 September 1898), 151-152, here 151. Responding to Van Loenen Martinet were: W. Zaalberg and W.H. Stenfert Kroese, 'Bondswijkverpleging', *Ibid.* 1898-35 (27 August 1898), 149.

25 During the 1897 general meeting, he had even urged the NPB to declare that district nursing was one of its main priorities. See: [J. van Loenen Martinet in:] *Verslag NPB 1897*, 26-27.

feeling of responsibility, sense of justice, love, [and] religious-ethical life." Under normal conditions, Van Loenen Martinet added, such "a vital urge" should automatically result in "social activities."²⁶ Organised social work within the framework of the national NPB, on the other hand, could not itself be an expression of religious life: unlike some local branches, the national NPB was not a congregation-like religious community, but an association. Furthermore, there was a "difference of opinion" among NPB members concerning "questions of a social and economic nature." Those members who, for one reason or another, wanted to be socially active in a different way would nonetheless be forced to share in the responsibility for district nursing if it were embedded in the organisational structure of the NPB.²⁷ At the 1898 annual meeting, a large majority expressed agreement with Van Loenen Martinet, although dissident, disappointed voices made themselves loudly heard.²⁸ Particularly in the weeks prior to the meeting, a major disagreement had surfaced in the columns of *De Hervorming*. One of the discussants, W.C. van Manen, therefore stated that the late Kuenen had been right in feeling that the NPB would hazard its existence if it ventured to become active in the field of social work.²⁹

The Commission for District Nursing was immediately discontinued at the 1898 meeting.³⁰ The Commission for Social Interests continued to exist, but had a strict mandate to only stimulate social consciousness without organising any actual social work. It thereby basically lost its *raison d'être*, but managed to prolong its existence until 1908.³¹

3 Views on Modernism in the Socialist Labour Movement

The fear that the fragile internal harmony in the NPB would be hazarded if specific solutions to the social question were adopted as official NPB policy thus immobilised the social activity of the NPB. This was all the more troublesome,

26 [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'De bond en "maatschappelijk werk"', *De Hervorming* 1898-40 (1 October 1898), 159.

27 [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'De bond en "maatschappelijk werk"', *Ibid.* 1898-41 (8 October 1898), 163. See also: [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Een inconsequentie?', *Ibid.* 1898-48 (26 November 1898), 191; 1898-49 (3 December 1898), 195.

28 *Verslag NPB* 1898, 25-27.

29 W.C. van Manen, 'De bond en wijkverpleging', *De Hervorming* 1898-38 (17 September 1898), 151-152, here 152.

30 [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'De algemeene vergadering', *Ibid.* 1898-46 (12 November 1898), 183-184, here 184.

31 *Handelingen NPB* 1908, 13.

because modernists came to realise that their movement had difficulty in reaching the working class. As early as the early 1880s, complaints were voiced that labourers were hardly represented in the readership of *De Hervorming*, the main vehicle with which modernists sought to influence public opinion.³² A decade later, modernists noticed that the distance between their movement and the working class had become a yawning chasm.³³ At a meeting of the NPB branch of Haarlem in 1891, for example, De Kanter, again urging the NPB to become socially more active, warned his audience that among the attendants of modernist religious services working-class people were absent.³⁴ Noting that the Roman Catholic Church and the neo-Calvinist Anti-Revolutionary Party took working-class interests to heart, the modernist-minded philosopher W. Meijer (1842-1926) argued several weeks later in *De Hervorming* that the modernist movement had to drop its social timidity if it wanted to be socially relevant.³⁵

De Kanter and Meijer both sought to generate a sense of urgency by stressing that while the modernist movement had failed to have any significant influence on labourers, another movement had managed to get a strong foothold within the working class in the meantime: the labour or, in simply political terms, the socialist movement.³⁶ Socialism partially resembled the modernist movement on a very abstract level, in the sense that it was also driven by the conviction that social reform was needed. Yet it did not 'compete' with the modernist movement in the same way as, for instance, Kuyper and his followers did: the modernist and neo-Calvinist movements propagated mutually exclusive religious views that were intended to pave the way for a reformation

32 E.g.: H.K., Jr., 'Wenken voor het maatschappelijk vraagstuk', *De Hervorming* 1882-09 (4 March 1882), 34; Een leek, 'Nederlandsche Protestantenvbond – Van huishoudelijken aard', *Ibid.* 1886-18 (1 May 1886), 70.

33 E.g.: [J. van Loenen Martinet in:] 'Binnenland – De Protestantendag', *Ibid.* 1896-45 (7 November 1896), 178-179, here 179; Frisius, 'De moderne richting en de werkende stand', *Ibid.* 1899-15 (15 April 1899), 57-58, here 57.

34 [H.Ph. de Kanter in: M.J. Mees], 'Nederlandsche Protestantenvbond – Een en ander uit de afdeeling Haarlem', *Ibid.* 1891-14 (4 April 1891), 54-55, here 54.

35 W. Meijer, 'Ingezonden stukken', *Ibid.* 1891-18 (2 May 1891), 71-72.

36 De Vos, seeing the labour movement primarily as a trade union movement, considers it as broader than the socialist movement, because there were also non-socialist trade unions. See: De Vos, *Geschiedenis van het socialisme in Nederland in het kader van zijn tijd* 1, 39. However, I see Catholic and orthodox Protestant trade unions as part of the Roman Catholic and neo-Calvinist movements, which eventually developed into institutionalised subcultures or 'pillars'. For this reason, I use the terms 'labour movement' and 'socialist movement' interchangeably, seeing the latter as the political manifestation of the former.

of ecclesial and social life, whereas the labour movement promoted the economic interests of a particular social class. Nonetheless, the rise of the labour movement did deepen the existing gap between the working class and the modernist movement.³⁷ During its formative phase, in the 1880s and 1890s, Dutch political socialism was suffused with an anti-religious spirit in general and an antimodernist spirit in particular. F. Domela Nieuwenhuis, the first socialist leader in the Netherlands, combined his promotion of working-class interests with criticism of religion, with a concentration on modernism. In so doing, he firmly established a negative image of the latter in the labour movement, an image that would not be corrected in succeeding decades.

As soon as Domela became a minister in the Evangelical Lutheran Church, in 1870, he began to actively participate in the modernist movement by attending national NPB meetings and writing articles in the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad* and *De Hervorming*. However, after being confronted with ubiquitous pauperism in his first congregation in Harlingen, losing his wife soon after the birth of a son, and reading *The True History of Joshua Davidson*, Domela began to increasingly doubt the tenability of the notion of a merciful God, a notion modernists still shared with their orthodox fellow Christians, and became more and more alienated from the church in the course of the 1870s.³⁸ In 1876, in a booklet called *'Het sociale vraagstuk en de kerk'* (*'The Social Issue and the Church'*), he openly and ferociously denounced what he perceived as the social indifference of the church: the social question should be recognised as a question of class conflict between the working or proletarian class – the terms are Domela's – on the one hand, and the propertied bourgeoisie, whose interests were promoted by the church, on the other. He implicitly blamed the church for comforting lower-class people by preaching contentment and piety instead of demanding material improvements in the working and living conditions of the proletariat.³⁹ Domela quickly lost all hope that the church would ever become the great instigator of social reform, and fully embraced political socialism, due to his contacts with the German non-ecclesial *freireligiöse*

37 Verberne and De Vos both place the emergence of the labour movement at around 1870. See: L.G.J. Verberne, *De Nederlandse arbeidersbeweging in de negentiende eeuw* (Utrecht and Antwerp 1959), 13; De Vos, *Geschiedenis van het socialisme* 1, 39.

38 This whole process is described in more detail in: Fafié, 'Van het revolutiejaar tot het begin van de Eerste Wereldoorlog', 557–565; J.W. Stutje, 'De vele geloven van Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis', in: M.P.A. de Baar, Y.B. Kuiper and J.W. Renders (eds.), *Biografie en religie. De religieuze factor in de biografie* (Amsterdam 2011), 40–54; J.W. Stutje, *Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis. Een romantische revolutionair* (Antwerp etc. 2012), 51–78.

39 F. Domela Nieuwenhuis, *Het sociale vraagstuk en de kerk* (s.l. [1876]).

Bewegung (Free Religious Movement), many of whose members were socialist party members. When the Free Congregation in Amsterdam, which religiously speaking somewhat resembled the *freireligiöse* congregations in Germany, presented itself as an alternative to church life in late 1877, Domela nonetheless kept aloof from it, because, as he later explained, it was too bourgeois.⁴⁰ Trying to move the NPB in a politically socialist direction stopped being an option for him as well, as became clear during a national controversy over the NPB membership of his socialist-minded acquaintance H.C.J. Krijthe.⁴¹ If he really wanted to spread the message of his new socialist 'faith', he therefore felt that there was only one conscientious thing to do: leave organised religious life altogether.

In 1879, Domela gave two last sermons in which he justified this decision. He began by stating that he whole-heartedly disliked denominationalism. The historical differences between them had become irrelevant, but church denominations still only cared about their own membership. Lutheran deacons, for example, only supported poverty-stricken fellow church members. Lutheran ministers, such as Domela himself, were called to exclusively serve the interests of the Lutheran community. By continuing their separate existence, church denominations implied that it was not enough to be a Christian; from the perspective of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, being a Lutheran apparently was the ultimate fulfilment of man's destiny. Domela no longer wanted it to be supposed that he agreed with this.⁴² But it was not only dissatisfaction with the existing, denominationally fragmented church life that forced Domela to resign as a Lutheran minister; the institution of the church as such impelled him to leave church life behind. The church, he argued, essentially did two things: it claimed that faith in God, about whose being and even existence nothing could be said with certainty, is the prerequisite for humans to realise their spiritual potential, and it separated those who endorsed this

40 F. Domela Nieuwenhuis, *Typen. Karakter-studies* I (Amsterdam 1903), 1-2; Stutje, *Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis*, 77.

41 Krijger, 'Een "klein verhaal" over een "groot Verhaal".'

42 F. Domela Nieuwenhuis, *Mijn afscheid van de kerk. Twee toespraken* (Haarlem 1879), 3-10. An extensive, and exemplary, reaction to Domela's resignation from a modernist perspective appeared in: 'Een afscheid van de kerk', *De Vrijheid* VII.42 (18 October 1879), 1-2; VII.43 (25 October 1879), 3-4; VII.44 (1 November 1879), 1-2; VII.45 (8 November 1879), 1-2; VII.46 (15 November 1879), 1-2; 'Ter zelfverdediging', *Ibid.* VII.47 (22 November 1879), 2. In response, Domela blamed modernists for still being supernaturalists without acknowledging it; he argued that their claim to believe in the supersensible instead of the supernatural came down to supernaturalism in practice. See: F. Domela Nieuwenhuis, 'Aan de redactie van "De Vrijheid"', *Ibid.* VII.49 (6 December 1879), 3-4.

claim from the rest of humankind. Domela, however, regarded society in its entirety as his 'church', and being human instead of being Christian as the supreme good in life. His religion was not an unsubstantiated faith in God, but "the religion of reason," which was based on the idea that "knowledge leads to the liberation of the human spirit" and only concerned itself with the here and now. His goal in life was to advance humanity or humanism.⁴³ Because his religion conflicted with, and was even diametrically opposed to, ecclesial religion, it was an illusion to think that striving for a thorough reformation of the church would ever succeed. What is more, Domela argued, the church as such had already become redundant: it was well on its way to completely losing its social significance, as it did not concern itself with what the masses needed most. Accusing modernists of being inconsistent, Domela therefore felt that leaving the church was the logical consequence of his dissatisfaction with church life. Yet, establishing voluntary associations to do what the church refrained from doing was not enough; the roots of social injustices should be eradicated, which, Domela implied, required structural changes to the fabric of social life.⁴⁴

After his resignation, Domela continued to reflect on, and write about, theological issues. Even though he would leave his Christian background further and further behind as time progressed, his view on Christianity and its shortcomings would not fundamentally change after 1879 – as the theologian C.W. Mönnich argues: "in [his farewell sermons], we find the most important outline of his theology. [. . .] [Throughout the rest of his life], we repeatedly find lines of thought that follow naturally from the perspectives outlined in his 1879 sermons."⁴⁵ This certainly applies to Domela's stand on the modernist movement.

Domela became a prolific journalist, during the first years after his resignation, ventilating his opinions primarily in *Recht voor Allen* (*Justice for All*), a socialist magazine that he began publishing on 1 March 1879, exactly six months before he left the church, and in *De Dageraad*. In the latter periodical, a first article written by Domela had appeared in 1878, arguing against the obligation to swear an oath by God in judicial and administrative contexts.⁴⁶ However, as a reprint, this article was not written with the intention of its being published in the freethinkers' magazine. Only in 1880 did Domela start

43 Domela Nieuwenhuis, *Mijn afscheid van de kerk*, 3-4, 10-16, 25.

44 *Ibid.*, 18, 22, 26, 29-30.

45 C.W. Mönnich, 'Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis, theologie en anti-theologie', in: J. Frieswijk, J.J. Kalma and Y.B. Kuiper (eds.), *Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis. De apostel van de Friese arbeiders* (Drachten and Leeuwarden 1988), 63-79, here 64.

46 Also published as a separate brochure: F. Domela Nieuwenhuis, *Het vraagstuk der eedsformule* (Haarlem 1878).

to deliberately contribute to *De Dageraad* – his first article was on Spinoza, while, significantly, his second article was an attack on the modernist movement.⁴⁷ Hiding behind the pen name ‘Philalethes’ (‘he who loves the Truth’), Domela mockingly portrayed modernists as “laughable people” who accused freethinkers of ridiculing faith without having sincerely studied Christianity, but who were not even able to clarify what they themselves meant by ‘Christianity’. He was convinced that reason and faith related to each other as exact opposites, and that only the faculty of reason could bring a man to truth. He accordingly caricatured modernism as “a mélange of the one [reason] and the other [faith], and the recipe for creating, or the tool for anatomising, ecclesial modernists is: blend a bit of faith with a bit of reason, mix them firmly together until a kind of pap comes into being, of which the thin layer floating on top consists of reason and the underlying rest, the actual core, consists of faith.”⁴⁸ In his criticism of religion, Domela did not exclusively focus on the modernist movement; disliking the church and religion in general, he gave both modernists and orthodoxy a piece of his mind. As he explained in *De Dageraad* in 1881,

the church is the institution that is always, in any form whatsoever, opposed to free thought. From the devout Catholic with his: ‘I believe because it is absurd’ to the modernist professor Opzoomer, who calls the recognition of God’s existence a truth not based on reason but on emotion, to the pastor of the Free Congregation in Amsterdam, who believes ‘with all his heart’ – all of them are opposed to free thought, which wants life to be guided by Reason. They are all supernaturalists, i.e. they believe in a world of invisible and unseen things, which is beyond sensory perception, beyond observation. [. . .] An unreasonable faith can never be based on reason and it is therefore that all modernist as well as orthodox theology is to be condemned, not because it is modernist or orthodox, but because it is theology.⁴⁹

Yet Domela did take a harder line with modernists. The reason for this, as he for example made clear in 1882 in a controversy with G.J.D. Mounier (1854–1917), a mathematician who regularly contributed to *De Hervorming*, was that modernists pretended to have a philosophy of life and worldview perfectly consistent with reason. In response to an article in which Mounier had asserted

47 For the article on Spinoza, see: Criticus [F. Domela Nieuwenhuis], ‘Spinoza in beeld’, *De Dageraad* 11/4 (1880/1881), 79–80.

48 Philalethes [F. Domela Nieuwenhuis], ‘De modernen en de vrijdenkers’, *Ibid.* 11/5 (1880/1881), 95–97, here 95.

49 F. Domela Nieuwenhuis, ‘De kerk en de vrije gedachte’, *Ibid.* 111/1 (1881/1882), 11–13, here 12.

that mathematics and physics could not be employed to deny the existence of the supersensible on scientific grounds, and in fact rather contributed to the development of religious life,⁵⁰ Domela accused Mounier of putting forward a circular argument: the latter stated that God exists because his conscience told him so, and affirmed that 'conscience' as a human faculty exists because it is God-given. The onus of proof, Domela argued, rested with those who postulated the existence of God, but Mounier, in cowardly fashion, reversed this by contending that the natural sciences are unable to prove that God does not exist. In doing so, modernists such as Mounier subordinated reason to faith.⁵¹

Domela not only chided modernists for what he saw as their epistemological half-heartedness, he also detested their exclusive claim to ethical purity.⁵² In an 1897 brochure, to take an example that shows that he did not tone down his critique of modernists later in life, he gave expression to his dislike of this modernist claim by referring to an unspecified paper in which the modernist opinion leader H. Oort had apparently characterised immorality as less reprehensible than unbelief.⁵³ Domela was enraged: how could Oort argue in good faith that child molesters and other evildoers deserved more respect than atheists and agnostics? Moreover, if Oort were really concerned with the spread of atheist ideas among the Dutch people, why did he just stand there in his ivory academic tower doing nothing to bring this to a halt?⁵⁴ Here again, Domela accused modernists of being half-hearted: they lacked character and principles. He preferred to cross swords with an opponent who did show his mettle and who did act out of a deep-rooted conviction worth sacrificing oneself for, an opponent such as Abraham Kuyper.⁵⁵

50 G.J.D. Mounier, 'Ingezonden stukken – Het atheïsme en de wiskunde', *De Hervorming* 1881-51 (24 December 1881), 207.

51 F. Domela Nieuwenhuis, 'Het atheïsme en de wiskunde', *De Dageraad* 111/10 (1881-1882), 305-309.

52 The 'halfheartedness' of modernism was a recurring theme in Domela's writings. See, e.g.: F. Domela Nieuwenhuis, 'Halven en heelen', *Bibliotheek van Moderne Theologie en Letterkunde* XIV (1875), 249-306; F. Domela Nieuwenhuis, *Van christen tot anarchist. Gedenkschriften* (Amsterdam [1910]), 35-37.

53 Although Domela spoke about a "philippic" Oort had held "not very long ago," the most probable source to which he refers is a brochure written by Oort nine years before, in 1888, titled '*Ongehoof erger dan onzedelijkheid*'. This unrecoverable brochure is mentioned in: Hooykaas, 'Levensbericht van Henricus Oort', 118.

54 F. Domela Nieuwenhuis, *De Jezustype, of de man van overtuiging* ([Amsterdam 1897]), 12.

55 [F. Domela Nieuwenhuis], 'Gewaardeerde tegenpartijder. Brief van Domela Nieuwenhuis aan Abraham Kuyper', reprinted in: Frieswijk, Kalma and Kuiper (eds.), *Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis*, 61-62; Stutje, *Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis*, 337. In Dutch historiography, Domela and Kuyper have been compared with each other several times. See,

In the same 1897 publication, Domela chided the late Rauwenhoff, another icon of modernism, for having been just as spineless as Oort. Rauwenhoff, whom Domela quoted, had once lamented that inspiring ideas were absent in political life, that the bourgeoisie did not generate the socially salutary influence it should exert on national life, that alcoholism, a lack of a good home life and loose morals were bringing the working class to ruin, and that reading contemporary literature had a dispiriting effect.⁵⁶ Saying this from the socially and materially comfortable position that Rauwenhoff had enjoyed, Domela felt, was rather dishonest: “why have we never heard that this professor said goodbye to the large house he lived in and the wealthy ambiance in which he dwelt, in order to go out into the world and, through the power of his principles, breathe new life [into the world]?” While preaching frugality and austerity, men such as Rauwenhoff were unwilling to give up the lives of luxury they themselves lived. While not being inspired by any principle themselves, they stigmatised those – here, Domela refers to himself – who were.⁵⁷

In his scoffing at Rauwenhoff, Domela implied that his criticism of modernists not only had a spiritual, but also a social nature. In his view, the modernist movement was all too comfortable with how social life was organised, failing to fully empathise with the working classes. Its adherents nevertheless claimed to be driven by the desire to create more social harmony, which they hoped to accomplish by advancing the spiritual development of individuals. As Domela relates in his memoirs, this was exactly what he had wanted to do as well: in the 1870s, the pulpit was his podium, from which he tried to permeate both church and society with Jesus’s spirit in order to uplift the masses.⁵⁸ However, as he became more and more alienated from a liberalism that only served the interests of the “self-satisfied bourgeoisie” and dominated the “dreary” political life at the time, he realised that modernists were not the allies he had hoped they would be: they acknowledged that social life needed reform, but that was it.⁵⁹ They were unwilling to unanimously opt for a politics that actually took working-class needs seriously, as Domela particularly noted when

e.g.: H. te Velde, *Stijlen van leiderschap. Persoon en politiek van Thorbecke tot Den Uyl* (Amsterdam 2002), 55–103.

56 It remains unclear to which source Domela refers here. This same source was referred to in: ‘Onze tijd’, *Ierseksche en Thoolsche Courant* 1891–290 (31 January 1891), 2. Slis’s 2003 biography on Rauwenhoff does not give any indication of the source Domela might be quoting here.

57 Domela Nieuwenhuis, *De Jezustype*, 11–12.

58 Domela Nieuwenhuis, *Van christen tot anarchist*, 29, 31. Similar criticism was voiced in: [J.A. Fortuijn in:] ‘Binnenland’, *Recht voor Allen* XI.303 (25 December 1890), 2.

59 Domela Nieuwenhuis, *Van christen tot anarchist*, 35–36.

he was asked to give a speech in the Free Congregation in Amsterdam. After giving this lecture, which he characterised as “socialism in a nutshell,” he was never invited again: “socialism in those circles – this went too far, because the propertied element that set the tone there just as much as elsewhere would otherwise quickly leave, and where then would the money to maintain the free congregation come from?”⁶⁰ Once more, Domela blamed modernists for being half-hearted: they *said* they wanted social life to change, but did not *do* anything to bring such a change about.⁶¹

In the opening article of the very first issue of *Recht voor Allen*, which reads like a manifesto advocating general enfranchisement, Domela voiced his disappointment with modernists, because they did not take the same course as he did – which they should, if they really wanted things to change. Arguing that political liberalism, the lackey of the monarchy, commerce and the church, willingly played down the cry for help welling up from within the working class, and that it had hence had its day, he approvingly cited what Opzoomer had asserted in 1873: lacking all conviction and principles, political liberalism did not have any idea of what it wanted, nor any awareness of what needed to be done in society. Political liberalism had stopped developing after 1848, when J.R. Thorbecke’s constitutional revision gave it its finest hour and when the difference between liberals and conservatives was the most important issue in politics. As other political differences had since become more significant, Opzoomer concluded that the liberal position should be abandoned and that a new position should be taken up.⁶² Domela fully agreed. However, he had become tired of waiting: Opzoomer may have said that he wanted to bury liberalism, but neither he nor anyone else had actually done so; neither he nor anyone else had made actual attempts to permeate society and politics with the spirit of reform that liberalism lacked.⁶³

Domela himself did make such an attempt. The rhetoric he used to vent his thoughts on political and social reform, and socialist discourse in general, fundamentally contrasted with the discourse of the spiritual aristocracy of tutors that went nearly unchallenged in modernist opinion until well into the

60 Domela Nieuwenhuis, *Van christen tot anarchist*, 47.

61 For more examples of socialist denunciations of modernists’ half-heartedness, see, e.g.: C., ‘Antwoord aan den heer Wilod Versprille’, *Recht voor Allen* VII.32 (24 June 1885), 2–3, here 2; [F. Domela Nieuwenhuis], ‘Volks?-onderwijs’, *Ibid.* IX.34 (27 April 1887), 1; [J.A. Fortuijn in:] ‘Binnenland’, *Ibid.* XII.303 (25 December 1890), 2.

62 Domela quoted: C.W. Opzoomer, *Onze achterlijkheid in de kunst der wetgeving, aangetoond vooral in die artikelen der grondwet, die aan het onderwijs gewijd zijn* (Amsterdam 1873), 71–72, incl. note 1.

63 [F. Domela Nieuwenhuis], ‘L.S.’, *Recht voor Allen* I.1 (1 March 1879), 1.

1890s and would continue to dominate modernist thinking afterwards. Concisely put, instead of maintaining that the spiritual reformation of individuals was the prerequisite for the reformation of society, Domela and socialist leaders after him contended that structural changes in the very fabric of society were a precondition for the improvement of man's quality of life. Even if they did not wholly agree with Karl Marx's (1818-1883) materialistic outlook on life, they still shared the materialistic point of view according to which society was not the sum of those who lived in it, but rather that man was primarily the product of his environment. In an 1880 article in *Recht voor Allen*, for example, Domela asserted that a poorly developed moral sense or a lack of piety was not what caused social wrongs – on the contrary, the cause of those wrongs was “the imperfect organisation of society.”⁶⁴ Waiting for society to improve through individual reform would take too long and, even more significantly, would keep the lowest class in a state of dependency on the classes above it: after all, in order to spiritually reform themselves, lower-class people needed to be ‘tutored’ by the bourgeois classes. In 1883, commenting upon a brochure issued by the modernist *Vereeniging tot verspreiding van stichtelijke blaadjes*, Domela fulminated against the preaching of such a ‘bourgeois’ discourse, as he accused modernists of doing:

be docile and work, do as you are told with diligence and delight, resign yourself to your fate, in order to live as satisfied and happily as possible. Everyone should stay in the circle in which he is placed. [. . .] [No,] the eyes of the people need to be opened; they should see how injustice takes place, how it is not rooted in nature, but rather the result of human creations and laws whereby the horses that deserve the oats do not get them. [. . .] Reasonable people cannot be satisfied with present-day social relations.⁶⁵

Structural changes to emancipate the low classes, Domela argued, were needed, and they were needed *now*.

Domela's dissatisfaction with the existing organisation of society occasionally filled him with an outright revolutionary spirit. A pre-eminent example of this is a lecture Domela gave in the Frisian village of Sint Annaparochie on 24 November 1889, of all places in an old church building still owned by the

64 [F. Domela Nieuwenhuis], ‘Zedebederf’, *Recht voor Allen* 11.36 (6 November 1880), 1. Another pre-eminent example is: [F. Domela Nieuwenhuis], ‘Wat willen de socialisten?’, *Ibid.* VI.1 (1 March 1884), 1-2.

65 [F. Domela Nieuwenhuis], ‘Alweer die berusting!’, *Ibid.* V.10 (5 May 1883), 1.

local Dutch Reformed congregation.⁶⁶ Approximately 1,500 attendants heard Domela give a speech on 'the French Revolution of 1789 in comparison with the present day.' Domela would later compare the scene in Sint Annaparochie during that Sunday in November 1889 to sixteenth-century 'field meetings', religious services that the first generation of Dutch Protestants had held in the open air during the first decades of the Reformation era. In the lecture itself, he made another comparison. In 1789, the group of republican secularists who would quickly rise to power in post-Revolutionary France had held its first meetings in a place of worship in the *Rue Saint-Jacques* in Paris, from which it took its name: the 'Jacobin Club'. Now, a group of people who were just as dissatisfied with the existing social order as the Jacobins had been one hundred years before, were gathered in a place of worship as well. According to Domela, the French Revolution had been the beginning of a process in which the third estate – the bourgeoisie – struggled out from under the power of the first and second estates, the clergy and the nobility. Blue-collar workers had helped the bourgeoisie to achieve this. However, the result of this process was that the bourgeoisie had simply come to replace the clergy and nobility as an all-powerful closed caste, unwilling to give the labouring masses the right of self-determination. According to Domela, the cause of social misery was to be found in this: the working classes had no access to political power. To a certain extent, the bourgeoisie recognised the destitution of the working classes, but the means by which it tried to mitigate social misery, such as the establishment of people's savings banks and soup kitchens – initiatives that enjoyed great support in modernist circles – did not truly help the masses develop; they merely maintained the dominion of the bourgeoisie. Therefore, a socialist revolution was needed as a fulfilment of the ideals inscribed on the banner of the French Revolution: liberty, equality, and fraternity. Domela ended his speech with an exhortation that, as the controversy following his appearance in Sint Annaparochie showed, was interpreted as a call for immediate revolt: labourers should join forces to combat moneyed interests.⁶⁷

66 Domela had received permission to lecture in this church building from the majority of members of the local Dutch Reformed congregation. One of them, Johannes Kuiken (1860-1938), explicitly made himself known as a political socialist who sympathised with Domela. See: J. Kuiken, 'Ingezonden stukken', *De Hervorming* 1889-11 (16 March 1889), 43-44; [J. Kuiken in: J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – De socialisten te St. Anna Parochie', *Ibid.* 1889-12 (23 March 1889), 46-47, here 47; J. Kuiken, 'Ingezonden stukken', *Ibid.* 1889-15 (13 April 1889), 59-60; J. Kuiken, 'Ingezonden stukken', *Ibid.* 1891-24 (13 June 1891), 98; J. Kuiken, 'Ingezonden stukken', *Ibid.* 1891-32 (8 August 1891), 129-130.

67 'Binnenland – Voordracht-Domela Nieuwenhuis', *Algemeen Handelsblad* LXII.19016 (26 November 1889), 1; Domela Nieuwenhuis, *Van christen tot anarchist*, 404-406. During a

The gradual rise of the *Sociaal-Democratische Bond* (Social Democratic League or SDB) that Domela founded in 1881 came to an end in the 1890s. The seat in the Dutch Second Chamber that Domela won in 1888 was lost during the parliamentary elections three years later. The agitation of the SDB for universal suffrage did not produce the desired result; on the contrary, it only induced the government to increase its repressive measures against the SDB.⁶⁸ In addition, Domela became more and more alienated from German socialism, with which his SDB had oriented itself from its founding onwards. Socialists in Germany, Domela came to recognise in the early 1890s, lacked a revolutionary spirit in that they placed their hopes too much on parliamentarianism, and in evidence the defects of all Germans: an excessive fondness for discipline, authority, and conservatism.⁶⁹ Domela was not the only Dutch socialist to develop a growing dislike of the 'bourgeois' parliamentary system. As a result, tensions erupted in the SDB.⁷⁰ In Friesland, the Social Democratic League took part in elections in a political cartel, called '*Friesche Volkspartij*' ('Frisian People's Party'), with progressive liberals. Socialists outside of Friesland feared that this collaboration would contaminate their movement with 'bourgeois' influences, and forced their Frisian fellow socialists to leave the provincial cartel.⁷¹ When a majority at the SDB congress in 1893 decided not to take part in the parliamentary elections of 1894, and the SDB was in danger of being prohibited due to its willingness to establish a socialist state by force instead of exclusively by electoral politics, a schism between the radical, revolutionary wing and the moderate, parliamentary wing of the party became inevitable. The radical wing, renaming itself '*Socialistenbond*' ('League of Socialists') following the judicial dismantlement of the SDB in late 1894, was led by Domela Nieuwenhuis, who, along with a significant number of supporters, adopted a radical anarchism and left party politics altogether in 1898.⁷² Domela would continue to raise his voice in public debate, but his anarchist stance caused him to lose his leading position in the organised labour movement. The role of

meeting of the Dutch Reformed synod on 31 July 1890, Domela was accused of having violated the civil order and of having expressed anti-Christian opinions. See: *Handelingen NHK 1890*, 154-162.

68 M.H.J. Buiting, *Richtingen- en partijstrijd in de SDAP. Het ontstaan van de Sociaal-Democratische Partij in Nederland (SDP)* (Amsterdam 1989), 21-22.

69 Stutje, *Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis*, 208-209.

70 J.H.A. van der Velden, *Van SDB tot SP. 125 jaar socialisme in Nederland* (Amsterdam 2008), 40-43.

71 Buiting, *Richtingen- en partijstrijd*, 22-23.

72 Domela described his development as a modernist minister into a socialist, and finally into an anarchist, in: Domela Nieuwenhuis, *Van christen tot anarchist*. See also: De Vos, *Geschiedenis van het socialisme* 1, 91-94.

flag-bearers of Dutch socialism was taken over by men such as Frank van der Goes (1859-1939) and, particularly, Pieter Jelles Troelstra (1860-1930).⁷³ They were the leaders of the Social Democratic Workers' Party, founded in 1894 by what had previously been the SDB's moderate wing, and were joined in 1900 by the remnant of the *Socialistenbond*.

Contrary to the SDB and the *Socialistenbond*, the SDAP took a less condemnatory stance towards religion. In practice, a distinction was made between organised religion and religious faith as such. The institution of the church should be attacked insofar as it thwarted the realisation of structural social reforms. It was part of, and supported, the existing social order, but this social order itself had to be overturned, not merely its cornerstones. If the SDAP were to officially incorporate atheism into its party doctrine, it would drive a wedge between religious and irreligious labourers and hence distract them from joining forces to defend their shared economic and political interests. This course was not only a matter of principle: behind it was the insight that religion would not soon disappear as a powerful force in society. Religious faith should therefore be dealt with pragmatically: it was to be neither encouraged nor denounced.⁷⁴ Motivated by the desire to broaden its electoral basis in order to gain power through parliamentary channels, and respecting freedom of conscience, the SDAP congress took the decision in 1902 not to oppose the equal treatment of public and private schools, one of the political core goals of orthodox Protestants and Roman Catholics.⁷⁵ Moreover, when the socialist freethinker J.A. Fortuijn (1855-1940) urged the SDAP to explicitly present itself as an *anti-religious* party, the congress of 1907 reaffirmed that religion was a 'private matter' and as such not something on which the SDAP should pass a value judgement.⁷⁶ Personally, however, SDAP leaders did not think very favourably of Christian religious ideas.⁷⁷

Other than Domela Nieuwenhuis, SDAP leaders did not specifically make modern theology or the modernist movement the butt of their anti-religious,

73 According to De Vos, the position Troelstra had within the SDAP was similar to the position Domela Nieuwenhuis had had in the early labour movement. See: De Vos, *Geschiedenis van het socialisme* I, 117-119.

74 Buiting, *Richtingen- en partijstrijd*, 121-122; H. Noordegraaf, 'Doorbraak toen en nu. Zestig jaar Partij van de Arbeid', *Socialisme en Democratie* LXIII.1-2 (2006), 9-15, here 10.

75 Buiting, *Richtingen- en partijstrijd*, 120-154; W.H. Vliegen, *Die onze kracht ontwakende deed. Geschiedenis der Sociaal-Democratische Arbeiderspartij in Nederland gedurende de eerste 25 jaren van haar bestaan* I (Amsterdam [1924]), 443-480. K. Geertsma, *De vrijheid van schoolrichting en de S.D.A.P.* (Arnhem 1931); A.P.E. Korver, 'De Groninger schoolmotie van de SDAP', in: M. Krop et al. (eds.), *Jaarboek voor het Democratisch Socialisme* VIII (1987), 15-54.

76 H.G. Leih, *Kaart van politiek Nederland* (Kampen 1962), 60.

77 Nor did most SDAP members. See: De Vos, *Geschiedenis van het socialisme* I, 125.

irreligious, or non-Christian pronouncements. Yet they did make clear, some more explicitly than others, that they felt no attraction to modernism whatsoever. Van der Goes, for example, respected labourers' religious sentiments, but strongly disliked religion himself.⁷⁸ The modernist movement, he argued, had some particular 'flaws'. These same 'flaws' were imputed to modernists by many contemporary intellectuals, particularly in the circle of belletrists in which Van der Goes had moved prior to his political career (and who are featured in the next chapter). Troelstra, on the other hand, although not belonging to any church and calling himself 'irreligious', acknowledged that Christianity and religion in general did not necessarily have to be the 'opium of the people.'⁷⁹ Having been raised by a freethinking father and a modernist mother, he even developed an interest in occultism and participated in Spiritist séances. Troelstra shared his brief engagement with Spiritism with other Dutch intellectuals of the *fin-de-siècle* era.⁸⁰ Most of these intellectuals identified themselves, just as Troelstra did, as 'socialists', which did not mean that all of them attached the same meaning to this term as Troelstra. As discussed in chapter 5, De Rooy explains this phenomenon by suggesting that Spiritism and socialism were part of a larger 'idealistic-humanitarian movement', which, on an abstract level, aspired after the same goal as the modernist movement: finding meaning in life and reforming society in a new, 'modern' way. The relationship between the two movements was nonetheless complicated, and crossovers took place in one direction only. A minority of modernists, who are dealt with in the next section, combined their faith with socialism. An even smaller minority of modernists combined their faith with occultism. Still fewer modernists synthesised their liberal Protestant convictions with both occultism and socialism.⁸¹ By contrast, non-modernist occultists, socialists, and occultist socialists did not incorporate liberal Protestant elements in their philosophies

78 R.L. Blom, *Frank van der Goes, 1859-1939. Journalist, literator en pionier van het socialisme* (Delft 2012), 190, 327.

79 P.J. Hagen, *Politicus uit hartstocht. Biografie van Pieter Jelles Troelstra* (Amsterdam 2010), 218-219, 342-344.

80 *Ibid.*, 336-339. See also: D. Jansen, 'Op zoek naar spiritistische elementen in de gedenkschriften van Troelstra', *It Beaken* LVII (1995), 61-79; J. Wulterkens, 'Geloof in daden. Het spiritisme van P.J. Troelstra', *Onvoltooid Verleden* xv (2002), 39-47; A. Holtrop, *Nynke van Hichtum. Leven en wereld van Sjoukje Troelstra-Bokma de Boer, 1860-1939* (Amsterdam 2005), 267-277.

81 L.A. Bähler is the most well-known modernist in this last category. An example of a modernist who combined his faith with occultism, in his case Spiritism, but not with socialism was C. Hille Ris Lambers. Politically, Hille Ris Lambers was a liberal. See: R. Klooster, 'Dr. Cornelis Hille Ris Lambers. Een opmerkelijke dienaar van God in Jorwerd', in: De Baar and Van Dijk (eds.), *Herinnering en identiteit*, 55-66, here 66.

of life. Troelstra, for one, never showed any liking for the modernist movement. Although he never ventured an opinion on modernism in particular, he intimated in his memoirs how he thought about it.

Looking back upon his youth and adolescence, Troelstra stated that religion had been absent from his parental home. This did not prevent him, however, from deeply reflecting on spiritual affairs.⁸² After years of inward struggle, he came to the conclusion that the existence of God was a matter of pure speculation and that he did not need a deity or supreme power to have an all-dominating ideal in life or to feel connected to the eternal cosmos.⁸³ Nonetheless, he respected others' religious feelings as manifestations of a heartfelt desire to give life meaning. What Troelstra did not appreciate, which he exemplified by quoting a lecture he had given in 1879, were attempts to either deny spiritual needs altogether or to rationalise these needs. Concerning the latter, he asserted that:

For individuals who are conscious of themselves and of the spirit of the age, Christianity is out-of-date, and instead of transforming and diluting it as one pleases, it should best be kept as it is [and] kept where it belongs: among infants and among all who blindly believe.⁸⁴

This sentence can hardly be interpreted other than as a 'put-down' of modernism: after all, modernists wanted to transform and 'dilute', or remove the dogmatic edges of, Christianity by trying to reconcile it with contemporary developments in theology, science, and culture. Troelstra thus suggests that his view on Christianity had not essentially changed in his later life.⁸⁵

How religion and the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century socialist movement related to each other was more complex than I can discuss here. Socialist discourse did feature anti-Christian phraseology, but was at the same time full of Christian terminology and gave expression, just as Christianity, to a teleological message of deliverance from misery.⁸⁶ Domela Nieuwenhuis was worshipped by his Frisian following as '*us verlosser*' ('our redeemer'). The twelve founders of the SDAP, among them Van der Goes and Troelstra, were colloquially referred to as the 'twelve apostles' in socialist history. Saying that

82 P.J. Troelstra, *Gedenkschriften* I. *Wording* (Amsterdam 1927), 135-136.

83 *Ibid.*, 263-264.

84 *Ibid.*, 165.

85 *Ibid.*, 167.

86 Van der Goes, for example, actually called socialism 'a new faith'. See: Blom, *Frank van der Goes*, 169.

the early organised labour movement was suffused with an anti-religious, or at best irreligious, spirit is hence only true if it is intended to say that ecclesial Christianity was, to put it mildly, not looked upon very favourably. In fact, socialism itself had characteristics of a new religion and was professed with religious intensity.

The issue at stake in this section is the following. Having resigned as a modernist minister, Domela Nieuwenhuis began to spread a socialist gospel with religious zeal and repeatedly lashed out at the 'bourgeois', 'socially conservative', and 'self-satisfied' modernist movement. Because he was the first real socialist leader in the Netherlands, his influence on the early labour movement was immense.⁸⁷ Due to his interspersing of anti-modernist taunts within his socialist discourse, blue-collar workers with socialist sympathies were constantly presented with a negative image of the modernist movement. Later socialist leaders did not rectify this image. They rather kept totally silent about religion, in order not to alienate Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish labourers from political socialism.⁸⁸

4 Views on Socialism in the Modernist Movement

When the labour movement emerged in the Netherlands in the 1870s, and particularly when it began to manifest itself as 'socialism' in the sphere of politics in the 1880s, responses to it in modernist circles were, on the whole, not very favourable. As of the late 1870s, modernist criticism of socialism was first and

87 De Vos states that the word 'leader' is far too weak to characterise the position Domela Nieuwenhuis had in the early socialist movement; he had the status of a messiah. See: De Vos, *Geschiedenis van het socialisme* I, 78-80.

88 This only applies to the pre-Second World War socialist movement. See: F. Becker, 'Een strijd om nieuwe verhoudingen. Sociaaldemocraten en christendemocraten in de Nederlandse politiek na 1945', in: P.H. van Dam, J.C. Kennedy and J.W.F. Wielenga (eds.), *Achter de zuilen. Op zoek naar religie in naoorlogs Nederland* (Amsterdam 2014), 301-331, here 301-310. If communism is included in the labour movement, the picture changes. In the official magazine of the Communist Party of the Netherlands (*Communistische Partij van Nederland* or CPN), which had come into being after a schism in the SDAP in 1909, religion was vehemently satirised. See: J. de Ruiter, 'Drie maal godslastering in het parlement', in: C.C. van Baalen et al. (eds.), *God in de Nederlandse politiek* (Nijmegen and The Hague 2005), 40-49, here 40-43. In the course of the 1930s, however, the CPN dropped its sarcastic mockery of religion in an attempt to form a united front with religious antifascists against National Socialism. See: A.A. de Jonge, *Het communisme in Nederland. De geschiedenis van een politieke partij* (The Hague 1972), 64.

foremost directed against Domela Nieuwenhuis – which could hardly be surprising, considering his anti-modernist statements analysed above. Moreover, it was directed against Domela's ally Krijthe, who created controversy in the NPB by stating that he did not believe in a God who is 'conscious of himself', and by repeatedly contrasting the hoped-for blessings of social democracy with the social indifference that he perceived in the modernist movement.⁸⁹ Modernist criticism of socialism was essentially threefold. First, the way in which socialism was promoted was deemed too 'vulgar', too 'unethical'. Instead of speaking in a cultured manner, trying to enhance the working class's level of civilisation, socialist leaders sought to mobilise the masses by using what modernist commentators saw as 'inflammatory' or 'rabble-rousing' rhetoric.⁹⁰ Socialist opinion leaders pitted people against each other with their preaching of a class struggle, whereas, as expressed in the discourse of the spiritual aristocracy of tutors, the general feeling in the modernist movement was that more social interaction between classes was needed.⁹¹ Second, socialism was generally regarded as too anti-religious in modernist circles. Socialist opinion leaders were accused either of 'unjustly' making Christianity responsible for all social misery, a claim that they highlighted by stimulating people to leave the church and to renounce religious faith altogether, or of claiming with justification that the true 'spirit of Jesus' was the same spirit with which the socialist movement was suffused.⁹² Third, the complaint was heard in the modernist

89 Krijger, 'Een "klein verhaal" over een "groot Verhaal".'

90 Domela's, as well as Kuypers', rhetorical style has been characterised as 'populist'. See: K.P.S.S. Vossen, 'Van marginaal naar mainstream? Populisme in de Nederlandse geschiedenis', *BMGN CXXVII.2* (2012), 28-54, here 29.

91 E.g.: [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'Binnenland – Hoe "Recht voor Allen" zich verdedigt', *De Hervorming* 1883-31 (4 August 1883), 122-123; Een leek, 'Nederlandsche Protestantenbond – Van huishoudelijken aard', *Ibid.* 1886-18 (1 May 1886), 70; H. Oort, 'Ons standpunt en onze taak', *Ibid.* 1888-44 (3 November 1888), 173-174, here 173; B.B., 'Onze taak', *Ibid.* 1888-47 (24 November 1888), 185; B. Tideman Jz., 'In den winter', *Ibid.* 1889-09 (2 March 1889), 33; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Over Christendom en socialisme', *Ibid.* 1889-14 (6 April 1889), 54-55, here 55; F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Jr., 'Brieven van een Amerikaansch student', *Ibid.* 1891-21 (23 May 1891), 83-84, here 84; 'Het socialisme – een godsdienst?', *De Protestant* III.36 (5 September 1885), 2-3, here 3.

92 E.g.: [J.W. van der Linden], 'Referaat van den heer J.W. van der Linden', *Ibid.* 1879-36 (6 September 1879), 142; 1879-37 (13 September 1879), 145-146; Vulkanus, 'Ingezonden stukken – Socialisme en godsdienst', *Ibid.* 1882-50 (16 December 1882), 200; P. van der Veen, 'Onze leestafel – "Socialistische logica"', *Ibid.* 1883-08 (24 February 1883), 31-32; 1883-11 (17 March 1883), 43-44; 1883-12 (24 March 1883), 48; [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'Ingezonden stukken', *Ibid.* 1884-30 (26 July 1884), 22; W. Haverkamp, 'Ingezonden stukken – De kerkvaders en de socialisten', *Ibid.* 1885-14 (4 April 1885), 56; [J. van Loenen Martinet],

movement that socialism as a social theory failed to appreciate the *waarde der persoonlijkheid*, the value of the individual personality. It only looked at society in terms of ‘masses’ in which individuality did not count. It wanted to turn the state into a ‘Moloch’ that would make private social enterprise unnecessary, a development which would, modernist critics objected, discourage both the moneyed classes from taking responsibility for setting up social welfare schemes and the poor from taking responsibility for their own lives. Moreover, by merely changing the organisation of social life, socialism would only treat the symptoms of social misery, but would not eradicate social misery root and branch. It might improve the situation of low-class people materially, but it would not reform their inner selves.⁹³

For these reasons, the early socialist movement – that is to say, socialism as a *political* ideology and system – had a bad reputation in modernist circles. In the modernist movement in general, the abominable living and working conditions of working-class families as these were sharply exposed by socialists, were recognised, and the necessity of social reform was felt, although a tiny minority ventured to question whether working-class conditions were really as miserable as Domela and his fellow socialists claimed they were.⁹⁴ From the mid-1880s on, some modernists came to look beyond the anti-modernist rhetoric with which Domela defended the cause of socialism, and began to publicly acknowledge that the socialist movement as such, notwithstanding the ‘wrong’ way in which it manifested itself and the ‘wrong’ solutions it put forward, was founded on an ‘ethical principle’, i.e. a sincere pursuit of social

‘Binnenland – Over Christendom en socialisme’, *Ibid.* 1889-13 (30 March 1889), 51; J. van Loon, ‘Orde of tuchteloosheid?’, *Ibid.* 1891-31 (1 August 1891), 124; ‘De socialisten’, *De Protestant* IV.29 (17 July 1886), 2-3.

- 93 E.g.: ‘Onze leestafel – “Aanleiding tot huiselijke en maatschappelijke welvaart”’, *De Hervorming* 1878-42 (19 October 1878), 3; [J.W. van der Linden], ‘Referaat van den heer J.W. van der Linden’, *Ibid.* 1879-37 (13 September 1879), 145-146, here 146; [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘Binnenland – Redding uit den maatschappelijken nood’, *Ibid.* 1884-06 (9 February 1884), 24; W. Zaalberg, ‘Van binnen uit’, *Ibid.* 1884-19 (10 May 1884), 75-76; W. Zaalberg, ‘Bij brood alleen niet’, *Ibid.* 1885-01 (3 January 1885), 2-3; W. Zaalberg, ‘Christendom en socialisme’, *Ibid.* 1885-08 (21 February 1885), 29-30; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Over Christendom en socialisme’, *Ibid.* 1889-14 (6 April 1889), 54-55; B. Tideman Jz., ‘Een werkman-profeet’, *Ibid.* 1890-13 (29 March 1890), 49-50; H.W.Ph.E. van den Bergh van Eysinga, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1891-25 (20 June 1891), 102; E. Snellen, ‘De moderne richting en het maatschappelijk vraagstuk’, *Ibid.* 1891-50 (12 December 1891), 199-200; ‘De socialisten’, *De Protestant* IV.30 (24 July 1886), 3-4.
- 94 E.g.: P. van der Veen, ‘Onze leestafel – “Socialistische logica”’, *De Hervorming* 1883-10 (10 March 1883), 39-40; [S. in:] ‘Feiten uit het sociale leven van den tegenwoordigen tijd’, *Ibid.* 1890-50 (13 December 1890), 199.

justice, and a better world.⁹⁵ In addition, some modernists came to appreciate the *gemeenschapsgedachte* (idea of solidarity) inherent in socialism. Disappointed with the merely economic focus of political liberalism, they asserted that respecting the value of the individual personality did not have to be equal to the philosophy of individualism defended by contemporary political liberalism. Moreover, these modernists began to argue that 'socialism' was not synonymous with the kind of politics Domela Nieuwenhuis and Krijthe championed.⁹⁶ For them, the word 'socialism' came to have a positive connotation, standing as it did for a hoped-for reformation of cultural and social life, and leading to a new cultural climate in which all individuals, no longer caught up in a struggle for survival, would have the opportunity to improve their minds, to broaden their horizons and to develop their spiritual lives, a climate in which class tensions would no longer threaten society with disruption.

Two of the most prominent modernists who came to use the term 'socialism' in such a 'socio-cultural' sense in the late 1880s were J.T. Tenthoff and J. van Loenen Martinet. Their dissatisfaction with the, in their view, lack of social reform-mindedness in politically liberal circles was shared by so-called 'social' or 'progressive' liberals, who emerged as a separate group within political liberalism in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. H. Goeman Borgesius was one of these. More than 'classical', 'orthodox' or 'old-school' liberals, social liberals, though not rejecting the capitalist structure of the economy and society as such, felt that private enterprise was not enough to combat the pauperisation of the working class; it was the duty of the state to 'correct' the negative social effects of capitalism. For them, liberty was not only a 'negative' concept, in the sense that government interference in socio-economic life was essentially an infringement of an individual's liberty and should therefore be reduced to an absolute minimum, but also a 'positive' one, in the sense

95 E.g.: [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'Binnenland – De belangstelling in het socialisme', *De Hervorming* 1885-07 (14 February 1885), 26; J.T. Tenthoff, 'Goed sociaal', *Ibid.* 1886-13 (27 March 1886), 49-50, here 49; J.H. Maronier, 'Het Heilsleger', *Ibid.* 1890-49 (6 December 1890), 193-194, here 194; [P. van der Veen in:], 'Binnenland – Vergadering van moderne theologen', *Ibid.* 1891-13 (28 March 1891), 51; W. Meijer, 'Ingezonden stukken', *Ibid.* 1891-18 (2 May 1891), 71-72; [F.P.J. Sibmacher Zijnen], 'Christelijk socialisme', *Ibid.* 1893-32 (12 August 1893), 126; J. van Loenen Martinet, 'Aan den heer W. Zaalberg', *Ibid.* 1893-32 (12 August 1893), 126.

96 E.g.: [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'Binnenland – Redding uit den maatschappelijken nood', *Ibid.* 1884-10 (8 March 1884), 39-40, here 39; F.P.J. Sibmacher Zijnen, 'Geen philanthropie alléén', *Ibid.* 1893-16 (22 April 1893), 62; [F.P.J. Sibmacher Zijnen], 'Gemeenschapszin', *Ibid.* 1893-23 (10 June 1893), 90-91; J. van Loenen Martinet, 'Aan den heer W. Zaalberg', *Ibid.* 1893-31 (5 August 1893), 122; [F.P.J. Sibmacher Zijnen], 'Christelijk socialisme', *Ibid.* 1893-32 (12 August 1893), 126.

that the state should ensure that all individuals have the opportunity for self-improvement. However, there was no consensus among progressive liberals regarding the question of *how* the state should realise this. Simply put: at the one end of the progressive liberal spectrum, there were people who urged the state to take 'corrective measures' *subsequent* to the workings of the economic process, who wanted the government to proactively set up, stimulate or facilitate social welfare schemes such as *toynbeewerk*, while at the other end of the spectrum, there were people who urged the state to intervene in the economic process itself, who thus wanted to build 'corrective measures' into social legislation *within* the capitalist system. Those who went furthest in their acceptance of government intervention in socio-economic life were somewhat pejoratively referred to as '*kathedersocialisten*' ('socialists of the professorial chair').⁹⁷ Tenthoff and Van Loenen Martinet differed from other progressive liberals, because for them 'socialism' did not have a negative connotation – on the contrary.

Addressing the question of which attitude the modernist movement should adopt towards the labour movement at the meeting of modern theologians in 1885, Tenthoff answered that this attitude "ought not to be one of hostility to [the labour movement], but should be one stimulating what is good in [it]." The despicable tune sung in *Recht voor Allen* ought not to obfuscate the fact that the labour movement was driven by a legitimate aversion for the current subordination of labour to capital.⁹⁸ In a lecture held a year later, at a meeting of modern ministers in the northern provinces, he put the labour movement in an even more favourable light by arguing that its *grondtrek* (main feature) was not a political, but an 'ethical' one. Again urging his fellow modernist ministers not to base their judgement of the labour movement on the anti-religious, demagogic rhetoric of its present leaders, Tenthoff went on to say that the labour movement had characteristics modernist ministers should praise and adopt themselves: it was an outcry against the lack of solidarity in society, challenged the notion that (political) power was the prerogative of the propertied classes, looked at social wrongs rationally instead of

97 For the emergence of social or progressive liberalism in the Netherlands, see: G. Taal, *Liberalen en radicalen in Nederland, 1872-1901* (The Hague 1980); S.P. Dudink, *Deugdzaam liberalisme. Sociaal-liberalisme in Nederland, 1870-1901* (Amsterdam 1997); F. de Beaufort and P.G.C. van Schie, *Sociaal-liberalisme* (Amsterdam 2014), 39-56, 112-127.

98 J.T. Tenthoff, 'Welke houding voegt ons ten opzichte der arbeidersbeweging, hier te lande?', *Bijblad van De Hervorming* 1885-04 (30 May 1885), 49-64, here 53. See also: J.J. Kalma, *Er valt voor recht te strijden. De roerige dagen rond 1890 in Friesland* (Zoetermeer 1978), 165.

as ineradicable quirks of fate, and attempted to make the working class more self-reliant, both socially and intellectually.⁹⁹ After 1886, Tenthoff came to fully embrace the word 'socialism' in reference to his ideal of how society ought to be organised. His doing so emerges from a lecture given in the department of the *Maatschappij tot Nut van 't Algemeen* in the North Holland town of Edam in 1890. Tenthoff somewhat cryptically began this lecture by applying Luke 2:34-35 to the emergence of socialism. According to this Gospel passage, an old man named Simeon had prophesied, although not in so many words, that Jesus would force people to declare themselves either against or in favour of the ideal – the ideal of the kingdom of God – that Jesus would preach later in life. Socialism, Tenthoff suggested, now forced people to declare themselves either against or in favour of an ideal as well. By applying Simeon's words to socialism, he thus suggested that the ideal of the kingdom of God coincided with the socialist ideal. Condemning the strong bourgeois bias against 'socialism', he enthusiastically spelled what this ideal involved: collectivisation of private property in order to achieve social justice.¹⁰⁰ Many attendants interpreted Tenthoff's lecture as outright politically socialist, social-democratic propaganda. The board of the local *Nut* department and the mayor of Edam therefore felt the urge to strongly denounce its content, being of the opinion that it imperilled social happiness.¹⁰¹

In the controversy following the Edam lecture, Van Loenen Martinet took up Tenthoff's defence.¹⁰² This was no surprise, as he had come to align himself with the socialist movement as well. As the editor-in-chief of the principal modernist weekly in the Netherlands, he had an influential position in

99 [J.T. Tenthoff in:] 'Verslag der vergadering van moderne pred. in de noordelijke provinciën, gehouden te Leeuwarden den 9 Juli', *De Hervorming* 1886-31 (31 July 1886), 124-125, here 124. See also: J.T. Tenthoff, 'Goed sociaal', *Ibid.* 1886-12 (20 March 1886), 45-46, here 46.

100 J.T. Tenthoff, *Het socialisme. Lezing gehouden te Edam* (Hoorn 1890). Some of those at the lecture complained that Tenthoff's lecture and his brochure were not identical in content. They also stated that they were most appalled by some remarks Tenthoff had made during the discussion following his lecture, remarks that were not included in the brochure. See: H.J. Calkoen, 'Ingezonden – De voordracht-Tenthoff te Edam', *Sociaal Weekblad* v.3 (17 January 1891), 31-32; H.J. Calkoen, 'Ingezonden stukken – Voordracht Tenthoff te Edam', *De Hervorming* 1891-03 (17 January 1891), 12; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Nogmaals de Edammer Nuts-beweging', *Ibid.* 1891-05 (31 January 1891), 19.

101 'Allerlei', *Algemeen Handelsblad* LXIII.19315 (11 November 1890), 2; H.J. Calkoen, 'Ingezonden stukken – Voordracht Tenthoff te Edam', *De Hervorming* 1891-03 (17 January 1891), 12.

102 [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Tenthoff's lezing', *Ibid.* 1890-48 (29 November 1890), 19; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – De Edammer Nutsbeweging', *Ibid.* 1891-01 (3 January 1891), 3.

the formation of Dutch modernist opinion. Based on his extensive, socialist-minded coverage of social affairs, it might seem as if socialism in a political sense was widely accepted in the modernist movement around 1890. Yet the opposite was true. As noted already in chapter 2, modernist dissatisfaction with the anti-ecclesial and socialist-friendly way in which Van Loenen Martinet edited *De Hervorming* reached a first peak in 1887, when the general NPB assembly decided to change the subtitle of the magazine, thereby emphasising that the editor-in-chief's opinions did not express official NPB policy. However, Van Loenen Martinet persisted in applauding those socialist views he could endorse. Provoking, by his own account, much disapproval, he gave a lecture during the second Dutch celebration of Labour Day on 1 May 1891, in which he applauded the socialist goal of an eight-hour working day.¹⁰³ Shortly thereafter, he indicated that he felt the most political sympathy for those who were willing to give the labour movement its due, and blamed political liberals for their unwillingness to recognise what was right about the demands that leaders of the labour movement were making.¹⁰⁴

Modernist indignation over his political views now reached a second, more vehement peak. In a series of 1892 articles, Van Loenen Martinet favourably discussed the proposal of the American political economist Henry George (1839-1897) to nationalise a country's land, i.e. to judicially prohibit private landownership.¹⁰⁵ Even in the most progressively liberal circles, this idea, put forward by political socialists, hardly found approval.¹⁰⁶ Feeling that this series of articles ought never to have been published in *De Hervorming*, the conservative-liberal parliamentarian J.G. Gleichman (1843-1906) promptly resigned his seat on the board of the national NPB. There was agitation also at the 1892 NPB meeting. The representative of the Menaldumadeel branch voiced the opinion of many when he stated that he would no longer recommend reading *De Hervorming* if Van Loenen Martinet continued to give the general public the impression "that the NPB is going in a socialist dir-

103 J. van Loenen Martinet, 'Over "den normalen arbeidsdag"', appendix to *De Hervorming* 1891-20 (16 May 1891), 81-82; J. van Loenen Martinet, *Over "den normalen arbeidsdag"*. Rede (Amsterdam 1891).

104 [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Vóór de stembus', *De Hervorming* 1891-23 (6 June 1891), 91; J. van Loenen Martinet, 'Voor een persoonlijk feit', *Ibid.* 1891-24 (13 June 1891), 96.

105 [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'De private grondeigendom voor de rechtbank van godsdienst en zedelijkheid', *Ibid.* 1892-21 (21 May 1892), 81; 1892-22 (28 May 1892), 85-86; 1892-23 (4 June 1892), 90; 1892-25 (18 June 1892), 97-98; 1892-26 (25 June 1892), 101-102; 1892-27 (2 July 1892), 105-106.

106 E.H. Kossmann, *De Lage Landen 1780-1980. Twee eeuwen Nederland en België* I. 1780-1934 (Amsterdam 1986), 281.

ection.”¹⁰⁷ The controversy surrounding his editorship did not prevent Van Loenen Martinet from continuing to write about ‘socialism’ in a positive way. In the first issue of 1893, he said that in political socialism “a voice testifying to religion” could be heard, with ‘religion’ being man’s innate, albeit not always consciously experienced, desire to live in perfect harmony with his fellow human beings, nature, and God.¹⁰⁸ Later that year, he repeatedly asked why the word ‘socialism’ continued to cause annoyance among modernists. His answer was that most modernists wrongfully identified ‘socialism’ with one particular political faction (Domela’s), while it in fact denoted a proposed organisation of society in which the social question would be permanently resolved. Anyone who felt that individualism had been carried too far and that social reform was needed, he maintained, was actually a ‘socialist’.¹⁰⁹

Although, in the words of his necrologist Oort, cited in chapter 2, his political ideas came close to those of the SDAP, Van Loenen Martinet never left the liberal side of the political spectrum.¹¹⁰ As chapter 9 addresses in more detail, this was true of most Dutch modernists. In the 1890s and early 1900s, Van Loenen Martinet even stressed his commitment to political liberalism by standing for election on the ticket of the so-called ‘*radicalen*’, progressive liberals who came to be known as ‘*vrijzinnig-democraten*’ (‘liberal democrats’) in 1901.¹¹¹ Tenthoff, on the other hand, was less committed to political liberalism. He sympathised with the *radicalen*, but occasionally also contributed to Domela’s socialist magazine *Recht voor Allen*. He criticised the labour movement, but simultaneously stood up for it within the modernist movement. Notwithstanding his ambiguous political identity, Tenthoff doubtlessly served as a

107 ‘Binnenland – Mr. J.G. Gleichman en “De Hervorming”’, *De Hervorming* 1892-45 (5 November 1892), 179-180, here 180. See also: Van Driel, “De Hervorming”, 143.

108 [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Een nieuw begin’, *De Hervorming* 1893-01 (7 January 1893), 2-3, here 2.

109 J. van Loenen Martinet, ‘Aan den heer W. Zaalberg’, *Ibid.* 1893-32 (12 August 1893), 126; 1893-33 (19 August 1893), 130-131; J. van Loenen Martinet, ‘Uit een particulieren brief’, *Ibid.* 1893-36 (9 September 1893), 142.

110 Oort, ‘Levensbericht van Johannes van Loenen Martinet’, 60.

111 V.G., ‘J. van Loenen Martinet’, *De Telegraaf. Zondagsblad* x1.3976 (22 August 1903), 1-2. In 1894, Van Loenen Martinet was said to endorse the program of the *Radicale Bond*. See, e.g.: ‘Pers-overzicht – Radicalen en rad.-liberalen’, *Het Nieuws van den Dag* 1894-7580 (11 October 1894), 5. In 1898, he made known he endorsed the political program of the *Liberale Unie*. See: [J. van Loenen Martinet in:] ‘Vervolg nieuwstijdingen – De verkiezing te Deventer’, *De Telegraaf* v1.1865 (8 February 1898), 2. In 1901, he supported the founding of the *Vrijzinnig-Democratische Bond*, which was a merger of the *Radicale Bond* and the left wing of the *Liberale Unie*. See: F. Netscher, ‘Nederlandsche politiek’, *De Locomotief* L.8 (20 April 1901), 5.

trailblazer for modernist ministers who came to embrace socialism in a political sense from the mid-1890s onwards – his biographer J.J. Kalma even calls him “one of the first red ministers.”¹¹² Many of these *rode dominees* had a link to Friesland. Perhaps more than in any other province in the Netherlands, ministers in Friesland were confronted with the destitution of those who did not profit from industrial, technological, and economic progress. Another reason why particularly, but not exclusively, modernist ministers in Friesland were willing to give their support to political socialism, had to do with the major influence Domela Nieuwenhuis, and later the SDAP, managed to exert on the poverty-stricken rural proletariat in the province: not being a socialist meant not having access to churchless paupers. These ‘red ministers’ openly rejected the kind of liberalism that had until then dominated the political orientation of the modernist movement, and sympathised with the SDAP. Some of them joined this party as of the late 1890s; others felt attracted to political socialism, but never joined the SDAP; and still others who initially had many objections against the Social Democratic Workers’ Party, but became SDAP members in the course of the 1900s.

Examples of the first group are W. Bax (1836-1916) and H.W.Ph.E. van den Bergh van Eysinga (1868-1920).¹¹³ From the early 1890s onwards, Bax demonstrated in public meetings, such as in discussions with Domela and the free-thinker Fortuijn in 1890 and a lecture held in the socialist hotbed of Sint Annaparochie in 1893, his support for socialist politics. He felt that ministers were not only called to propagate ‘Christian principles’ in the pulpit, but also in the political arena, and that these Christian principles could best be actualised under the banner of social democracy.¹¹⁴ His openly professed socialist political creed caused so much turmoil in the Dutch Reformed Church that some elders in The Hague successfully persuaded the synod in 1893 to express its disapproval of the way “in which Bax participates in the fight against private property and the existing social order.”¹¹⁵ In response, Bax wrote an open letter to the synod, which he published as a brochure. That letter spells out his motivation for sympathising with socialist politics. Bax affirms that the political application of Christian principles is realised in socialism. Two of those principles, love and justice, necessitate ensuring a decent existence for all. However, the current capitalist organisation of society made this impossible. Bax

112 J.J. Kalma, *Ds. J.Th. Tenthoff (1847-1916), een der eerste “rode dominees”. Bibliografische aantekeningen* (Leeuwarden 1981).

113 Another example of this group, G.W. Melchers, who was the first minister to join the SDAP in 1896, is dealt with in: Noordegraaf, ‘Water en vuur’, 145-151.

114 W. Bax, ‘Aan den heer W. Zaalberg te Deventer’, *De Hervorming* 1893-25 (24 June 1893), 98.

115 *Handelingen NHK* 1893, 91-93.

did not subscribe to the Marxist, materialistic viewpoint that man is primarily the product of his environment, but he did emphasise that environmental conditions, such as poverty, have a strong influence on man's spiritual life. Attempts to reform individuals without simultaneous attempts to change the existing fabric of society would therefore be of no avail; structural changes were needed. Against those who considered his advocacy of socialism to be in contravention of church regulations, which required all ministers to strengthen civil order and social harmony, Bax replied that capitalism fostered and preserved social tensions. And did the Dutch Reformed Church, he rhetorically asked, oblige its ministers to cling to capitalism? Moreover, since the churches were losing their working-class members more and more to the socialist movement, participating in that movement was the only way in which ministers could get into contact with labourers.¹¹⁶

In 1897, Bax agreed to Leeuwardian social democrats' request that he take part in the parliamentary elections on their behalf, although he was not an SDAP member; he only joined the party *after* his nomination. This stirred up ill-feeling among national party executives. In *De Sociaaldemokraat* (*The Social Democrat*), the official party periodical, they published a press release in which they stated that, while they accepted the *fait accompli*, they also strongly denounced the nomination of someone who had never before showed interest in joining the SDAP. 'Dubious elements' such as Bax might not be socialists in the same pure sense as confirmed SDAP members and could embarrass the party.¹¹⁷ Van der Goes, one of the founding fathers of the SDAP though not a party executive, questioned the purity of Bax's socialist commitment in more guarded terms. Although he had declared that the essentially non-religious character of political socialism was no reason for the SDAP to deny membership to people with religious faith,¹¹⁸ he could not hide his strong personal anti-religious sentiments in this case. In the cultural and literary journal *De Kroniek* (*The Chronicle*), he called Bax's candidature "remarkable" and insinu-

116 W. Bax, *Verdediging en terechtwijzing ten opzichte eener synodale motie. Onuitgesproken toespraak* (Amsterdam 1894). The elders in The Hague reacted to Bax's brochure by publishing a brochure themselves, in which they argued that political socialism was a "heresy" and that the abolishment of private property would merely lead to the rejection of marriage, family life, church life, and ultimately of God. See: *De "predikant-socialist". Een stem uit de boezem der Nederduitsche hervormde gemeente van's-Gravenhage* (The Hague 1894).

117 Vliegen, *Die onze kracht ontwakende deed* 1, 198-200. See also: P.J. Troelstra, *Gedenkschriften* 11. *Groei* (Amsterdam 1928), 155-156.

118 S. de Wolff, *En toch...! Driekwart eeuw socialisme in vogelvlucht* (Amsterdam 1951), 103-104.

ated that Bax represented some kind of “white-collar democracy” that illegitimately placed itself under the banner of social democracy.¹¹⁹ Van der Goes thus implicitly associated being a minister with being necessarily bourgeois and put the admittance into the SDAP of supporters of religion, whom he considered to be one of the cornerstones of the ‘horrible’ bourgeois social order, in a poor light.

Other modernist ministers nonetheless followed in Bax’s footsteps. The Dutch Reformed Van den Bergh van Eysinga, for example, joined the SDAP in 1899. In a brochure, he justified this decision. The older he got, the more Van den Bergh van Eysinga came to perceive just how wicked contemporary society was. He had initially considered Christianity to be the only force that was powerful enough to permeate society with a more idealistic spirit than the dominant spirit of greed, but, just like society in general, contemporary Christianity was imperfect and deformed. Because of this, he had joined, and still participated in, the modernist movement, which tried to revitalise both Christianity and society. In modernist circles, however, spiritual life was “dull” and there was a lack of “commiseration with the wounds and sins of the people.” After turning to Tolstoy – whose ‘practical Christianity’ he enthusiastically embraced as an alternative to the deeply anti-religious early political socialism, but whose romantic portrayal of a historical Jesus he quickly came to reject – and after also studying philosophy and Marx’s writings in the mid-1890s, Van den Bergh van Eysinga began to realise that economic disparities were at the bottom of social misery. What particularly appealed to him in Marx’s thinking was its historical materialism. According to him, this theory did not teach that, as many of Marx’s disciples believed, only matter is real and spirit is an illusion, but rather that “religion, art, science, ethics, all these invisible things are reflections of existing economical relations.” Van den Bergh van Eysinga hence came to believe that “the spiritual fatigue, the irreligion, the tremendous ugliness that I see and hate in our century and our nation” mirrored the ‘decomposition’ of the capitalist social structure. Similarly, he became convinced that if the economic organisation of society improved, the general level of piety and morality in society would also improve. That he did not immediately join the SDAP had to do with his fear of the class struggle, a dominant element in socialist discourse. Yet, now that he realised that the intention of the SDAP was not to *launch* a class struggle, since such a struggle was already being waged,

119 F. van der Goes, ‘Een opmerkelijke kandidatuur’, *De Kroniek* 111.133 (1897), 220. This same interpretation is found in: [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Witte-vesten-demokratie’, *De Hervorming* 1897-29 (17 July 1897), 115.

but rather to *solve* it, there was no obstacle left to prevent him from finally joining the “party of the future.”¹²⁰

An example of the second group, consisting of politically socialist modernist ministers who kept aloof from the SDAP, is the Dutch Reformed A.W. van Wijk (1852-1918). Although sharing the ideal of a non-capitalist society for which the SDAP strived, he felt that it would be unconscionable for a Christian to join a party founded on the Marxist theory of class struggle and that was preoccupied with material interests while totally ignoring the spiritual causes of social wrongs.¹²¹

Van Wijk could not overcome his objections, but others, constituting the third group distinguished above, ultimately could. Examples are the ministers who established the Christian-socialist magazine *De Blijde Wereld* in 1902.¹²² As its founders, all based in Friesland, explained in the first issue, the publication of *De Blijde Wereld* was needed to show the anti-socialist bulk of Christians and the non-religious, or at best religiously indifferent, majority of socialists that “the two great forces of today,” Christianity and socialism, cannot do without each other in preparing for the society of tomorrow. Instead of claiming that individual reform should precede a structural reform of society, as was averred by the discourse dominant in modernist circles, or that it would flow from such a structural reform, as maintained in socialist discourse, these ministers argued that individual reform and social reform could only be accomplished simultaneously.¹²³ The *Blijde Wereld* ministers had initially toyed with the idea of founding a political party of their own, but dropped it due to a lack of support from colleagues who were known to have socialist sympathies, and out of fear that such a party would not stand a chance against the

120 H.W.Ph.E. van den Bergh van Eysinga, *Mijn toetreden tot de S.D.A.P.* (Amsterdam 1899), 7-12. Van den Bergh van Eysinga hoped to permeate socialism with a ‘spiritually aristocratic’ spirit – he used this term himself – in the sense explained in chapter 6. See: H. Noordegraaf, *Henri van den Bergh van Eysinga, 1868-1920. Revolutionair, predikant en volksopvoeder* (Zutphen 1991), 70-73.

121 B. Hijma, ‘Wijk, Aart Willem van (1852-1918)’, in: J. Folkerts, J.M.M. Haverkate and F. Pereboom (eds.), *Overijsselse biografieën 111. Levensbeschrijvingen van bekende en onbekende Overijsselaars* (Amsterdam and Meppel 1993), 132-136, here 133-134. See also: A.W. van Wijk, ‘Christensocialisme’, *De Hervorming* 1907-41 (12 October 1907), 324.

122 Another example is A. de Koe (1866-1941), who did not belong to the circle around *De Blijde Wereld*. De Koe was an admirer of Tolstoy and joined the SDAP in 1903, after a stay of two years in a commune of Tolstoyans. See: [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Berichten, enz. – Uit Walden’, *Ibid.* 1903-08 (21 February 1903), 59-60.

123 ‘Aan de lezers’, ‘Is de uitgave van dit blad wenschelijk?’, *De Blijde Wereld* 1.1 (31 October 1902), 1.

SDAP.¹²⁴ Although they unequivocally sided with the SDAP in their magazine, they felt that “most of its leaders and its publications *Nieuwe Tijd* and *Volk*” defended the cause of social democracy in “a strongly Marxist and anti-religious spirit,” which made it impossible for them to apply for SDAP membership.¹²⁵ *Het Volk* (*The People*) was a daily newspaper financed by the SDAP and edited by leading party members, such as Troelstra from its founding in 1899 until 1903 and P.L. Tak (1848–1907) between 1903 and 1907. *De Nieuwe Tijd* (*The New Age*) was a monthly in which the most pronouncedly anti-religious social democrats, particularly Frank van der Goes, Herman Gorter (1864–1927), and Anton Pannekoek (1873–1960), theorised about socialist philosophy. The last two were Marxist hardliners, who criticised the SDAP for pursuing a socialist state through parliamentary elections instead of a revolution, and collaborated in the founding of the precursor of the Communist Party of the Netherlands in 1909.¹²⁶ After the *Blijde Wereld* ministers came to realise that such men as Van der Goes, Gorter, and Pannekoek were not representative of the entire SDAP, and having experienced that most party sympathisers “snapped their fingers” at Marxist theorising, they were ready to drop their objections to the party. Moreover, as they explained in *De Blijde Wereld* of 15 December 1905,

the sense of duty to organise ourselves as social democrats; the certitude that we can combat Marxist prejudices [against religion] more easily within than outside of the party; the prompting of social democrats among our acquaintances, with whom we would like to collaborate; the satisfactory declaration of the SDAP that it is the duty of the party to break the political and economic power of the church without intending to offend anyone’s religious feelings inside or outside of the party[.]

had compelled them to finally join the SDAP.¹²⁷

124 H.J. Wilzen, “De Blijde Wereld” 1902–1932, in: H.J. Wilzen and A. van Biemen (eds.), *Samen op weg. Vijftig jaar ontmoeting tussen christendom en socialisme in “De Blijde Wereld” en “Tijd en Taak”* (Amsterdam 1953), 17–90, here 38.

125 As J.A. Bruins, Jr. (1872–1947), the central figure in the *Blijde Wereld* group, explained at a meeting of a socialist electoral association in Heerenveen on 14 January 1904. See: ‘Uit de partij – Buiten de partij’, *Het Volk* IV.1161 (17 January 1904), 2. Noordegraaf mentions Bruins, together with Melchers, as an example of early connections between liberal Protestantism and political socialism. See: Noordegraaf, ‘Water en vuur’, 151–155.

126 J.P. Gerber, *Anton Pannekoek and the Socialism of Workers’ Self-Emancipation, 1873–1960* (Dordrecht and Amsterdam 1989), 88–89.

127 ‘Van verre en nabij’, *De Blijde Wereld* III.8 (15 December 1904), 3–4. See also: “De Blijde Wereld”, *Het Volk* VII.1948 (10 August 1906), 1–2, here 2.

Socialist modernists considered their convictions to be the next phase in the religious development of mankind: whereas modernism had been a perfection of Protestantism, *socialist* modernism now announced itself as a perfection of modernism. The Dutch Reformed F. Reitsma (1876-1918), who did not belong to the *Blijde Wereld* group, but, until he distanced himself from the SDAP in the early 1910s, voiced his socialist political creed in the local monthly *Vergeet mij niet* (*Do Not Forget Me*), argued in 1906 that only Christian socialism was able to generate the new religious enthusiasm to which the modernist movement aspired. Just as the latter had eventually superseded the *evangelische* movement, socialist modernism would in due course do the same with non-socialist modernism.¹²⁸ Reitsma therefore felt that it was “slightly premature” to call the emergence of modernism in the second half of the nineteenth century a ‘second Reformation’: “modernism is merely an intermediate stage.” Although he was not one hundred per cent sure if socialist modernism would be the *ultimate* completion of religious development and if the masses would embrace it, as “we [ministers, TK] are and continue to be bourgeois, linked to capitalist interests by descent, tradition and contacts,” he was convinced that modernist ministers could only make potentially successful attempts to spiritually reform society if they integrated the ideas expressed in socialism into their theology.¹²⁹ Also in 1906, the *Blijde Wereld* ministers stated that the modernist movement had fallen short in terms of its social effectiveness, because its adherents had lacked the awareness that a precise application of modernist religious principles to social life inevitably leads to socialism. *True* modernism, they contended, was essentially socialist.¹³⁰ The Dutch Reformed minister H.A.J. van Wijhe (1877-1909), who took part in the parliamentary elections on behalf of the SDAP in the year of his death, fully agreed: to those modernists who firmly believed in the individual-centred ethics implied in the discourse of the spiritual aristocracy of tutors, he replied that socialism would break the power of some to exploit others and hence would “create the conditions enabling society, the family, and the human personality to develop according to their own true nature.”¹³¹ Because of this, Van Wijk affirmed, socialism was “a

128 [F. Reitsma in:] ‘Berichten, enz. – Neo-modernen’, *De Hervorming* 1906-27 (7 July 1906), 211.

129 F. Reitsma, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1906-32 (11 August 1906), 253-254.

130 ‘Berichten, enz. – “De Blijde Wereld”’, *Ibid.* 1906-32 (11 August 1906), 251.

131 H.A.J. van Wijhe, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1906-48 (1 December 1906), 381-382. In 1898, A. van der Heide also stressed that only socialism enabled people to be true individuals. He further argued that society was inevitably developing in a socialist direction, and hence urged the modernist movement to anticipate this development and to advance the socialists’ cause. See: A. van der Heide, *Socialisme en godsdienst. Voordracht, gehouden in de Vrije Gemeente op Maandag 21 Nov. 1898* (s.l. s.a.), 20, 30.

requirement for Christianity.”¹³² As Van den Bergh van Eysinga explained, religious socialism was a comprehensive philosophy of life. For socialist modernists, being socialist was thus no ‘add-on’ to being modernist, but an essential and inseparable element of their modernist persuasion.¹³³

While the socialist movement had been suffused with an anti-religious spirit in its earliest phase, S.K. Bakker, one of the *Blijde Wereld* ministers, now perceived an increased interest in spiritual affairs among blue-collar workers. “If I am correct,” he argued, “then there is a great and important task for the NPB to fulfil: to turn this little spark into a bright flame, to strike the iron, which is getting hot, with a steady hand.”¹³⁴ In its endeavour to give every individual the opportunity to develop his inner life, the modernist movement found an ally in socialist politics. After all, as Bakker maintained, while socialism rightfully teaches that individuality only attains meaning when it is placed at the service of the community, as long as people are bound in the chains of the capitalist system, they would not be able to develop themselves as individuals. Destroying these chains was exactly what socialism strived for.¹³⁵ If the modernist movement wanted to reach its goal, its ministers should establish more contacts with the working class, which they could only do if they actively participated in the socialist movement. Non-socialist ministers, as an anonymous ‘minister outside of Friesland’ explained, did not recognise labourers’ yearning for spiritual fulfilment, since this yearning did not find expression in conventional Christian terminology, but rather in ‘socialist’ vocabulary.¹³⁶ In line with this, A. van der Heide, who had joined the SDAP in 1897, being the second minister to do so after his fellow modernist G.W. Melchers (1869-1952),¹³⁷ made a plea for a socialist preaching: to lead labourers back into religious and ecclesial life, ministers should address them in their own ‘language’, which was the language of social democracy.¹³⁸

132 A.W. van Wijk, ‘Christen-socialisme’, *De Hervorming* 1907-40 (5 October 1907), 315-316, here 316.

133 H.W.Ph.E. van den Bergh van Eysinga, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Antithese?’, *Ibid.* 1913-44 (1 November 1913), 350-351.

134 S.K. Bakker, ‘Kentering’, *Ibid.* 1907-07 (16 February 1907), 50-51, here 51.

135 [S.K. Bakker in:] ‘Berichten, enz. – “De Blijde Wereld”-dag’, *Ibid.* 1912-22 (1 June 1912), 172. He had already put this forward in: S.K. Bakker, *De zedelijke beteekenis van het socialisme* (Rotterdam 1907), 13-14. See also: G. Horreüs de Haas, *Godsdienst en socialisme* (Amsterdam 1924), esp. 101-102.

136 Een predikant buiten Friesland, ‘Ingezonden stukken – “Toen en nu?”’, *De Hervorming* 1911-20 (20 May 1911), 158.

137 M.A.G. de Harder, *Albertinus van der Heide (1872-1953). Rode dominee tussen pastoraat en parlement* (Kampen 2011), 84-86.

138 [A. van der Heide in: H. de Lang], ‘Redactioneel – “Odéon”’, *De Hervorming* 1914-29 (18 July 1914), 247-248.

Not everyone in the SDAP was pleased to see ministers entering their party. In particular those who maintained that Marxism as an economic theory, intended to systematically overturn capitalism, and as a philosophy of life, grounded on the idea that there is no God, are inseparable, and who urged the SDAP to explicitly integrate this view into its political programme, denounced the *Blijde Wereld* ministers for defending a religious cause within party structures. R.K.H. Kuiper (1874-1934), for example, said that ministers were welcome to join the SDAP, especially in order to show religious labourers that their religious creed was perfectly compatible with a socialist political creed. However, ministers should not join the party in an attempt to change it, particularly in an attempt to challenge the Marxist worldview. In order to beat off attacks from political opponents, the party needed to have a solid ideological basis. The philosophical and scientific fundamentals of Marxism served this end best, all the more so since proletarians intuited, and would in due course understand, that those fundamentals were completely in line with what he thought and felt. Consequently, he would certainly not fall into the arms of the *Blijde Wereld* ministers, because

there is one philosophy [of life] at which the proletariat laughs in particular: it is the philosophy of those who are standing in between the orthodox Christian and the irreligious way of thinking and feeling, the philosophy of those who [. . .] have not yet completely shaken off the old and who cannot yet completely grasp the new. The proletarian is always either the one [i.e. orthodox Christian] or the other [i.e. irreligious]. What is in between is [only professed] by a part of the bourgeoisie, and [only] by a part of that part of the bourgeoisie that turns to the proletarian camp. And the chances of winning the organised proletariat of our party [. . .] to religion are zero.¹³⁹

In other words, Rudolf Kuiper believed that those who spiritually steered a middle course between orthodox Christianity and unbelief, i.e. modernists, were essentially bourgeois and would therefore never be able to approach the proletariat.¹⁴⁰

Another advocate of Marxist philosophy, Joseph Loopuit (1864-1923), also criticised socialist-minded ministers who were unwilling to simply be 'absorbed' into the socialist movement at large, and entered into this movement as a distinct clique loudly reclaiming that social democracy as such was not

¹³⁹ R. Kuiper, 'De Blijde Wereld', *Het Volk* VII.1951 (14 August 1906), 1.

¹⁴⁰ See also: R. Kuiper, 'Sociaal-democratie, marxisme en godsdienst', *Ibid.* IX.2561 (11 August 1908), 5; R. Kuiper, 'De verstoorde "Blijde Wereld"', *Ibid.* IX.2598 (17 September 1908), 5.

good enough.¹⁴¹ In a 1907 brochure included in the series *Pro en contra* (*Pros and Cons*), he crossed swords with the liberal Reformed minister D.A. van Krevelen (1872-1947) on the issue of Christian socialism. Van Krevelen, who was not a member of the SDAP, maintained that socialism reaches its ultimate fulfilment when it is suffused with the piety and fraternal love that the 'spirit of Christ' awakens in one's heart. Loopuit, however, considered Christian socialism to be undesirable and superfluous. By acting as a distinct current within the labour movement, Christian socialism would separate some labourers from others and hence weaken the strength of the proletariat as a whole. In any case, Christianity was not needed to bring about the transition from a capitalist production economy to a socialist society – after all, as Loopuit believed, this transition was inevitable –, but champions of Christian socialism might lead some labourers to think that it was, and thereby slow down the transition process. Loopuit further argued that Christian socialism was not free of bourgeois features and was at odds with the inherently non-religious and revolutionary character of socialism.¹⁴² He later blamed the *Blijde Wereld* ministers for trying to 'Christianise' the class struggle.¹⁴³

Rudolf Kuyper and Loopuit were not the only ones finding fault with the entry of modernist ministers into the SDAP. Those socialist-minded modernists who objected to the party's preaching of the class struggle, such as Van Krevelen and Van Wijk, voiced their criticisms as well. The latter wrote in 1907 that the SDAP was permeated with the same spirit of selfishness and greed of which it accused capitalism: after all, the SDAP wanted to overturn the capitalist order because this was in the interest of one particular class, and wanted to do this by means of a struggle for absolute power and control of all capital goods. Christian socialists, on the other hand, wanted a new social order because the capitalist system made it impossible for them to actualise the love and justice that were Christianity's driving force. How then could a Christian socialist wish to belong to the SDAP?¹⁴⁴ The *Blijde Wereld* ministers had, nonetheless, already declared in 1906 that they "felt more and

141 There was one modernist minister who was simply 'absorbed' into the socialist movement: F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Jr. He resigned his office in 1899 and joined the SDAP. Soon afterwards, he renounced his religious faith altogether. See: H. Noordegraaf, 'F.W.N. Hugenholtz als voorganger van de Protestantenbond in Schiedam', *Holland* XXIII (1991), 29-44, here 42.

142 D.A. van Krevelen and J. Loopuit, *Christen-socialisme* (Baarn 1907). See also: 'Boekbeoordeeling', *Het Volk* VIII.2316 (22 October 1907), 6; A.W. van Wijk, 'Christen-socialisme', *De Hervorming* 1907-39 (28 September 1907), 306-307; 1907-40 (5 October 1907), 315-316; 1907-41 (12 October 1907), 324.

143 J. Loopuit, 'Ingezonden – Godsdienst en socialisme', *Het Volk* IX.2477 (1 May 1908), 7.

144 A.W. van Wijk, 'Christen-socialisme', *De Hervorming* 1907-41 (12 October 1907), 324.

more at home in the SDAP.” This had to do with the rapidly diminishing influence of Marxist hardliners within the party, some of whom were even expelled from the SDAP in 1909.¹⁴⁵ As a result, explicitly combining one’s socialist political creed with a religious one became less controversial within the SDAP.

Although ministers remained a numerically small group within the SDAP, they were partially responsible for giving the party a different ‘face’. This found expression in an alternative, jesting interpretation of the abbreviation ‘SDAP’ that took root in the 1910s and 1920s; non-socialists came to denote the party as the ‘*Schoolmeesters-, Dominees- en Advocatenpartij*’ (‘Party of Schoolteachers, Ministers, and Lawyers’).¹⁴⁶ With the word ‘ministers’, here *modernist* ministers were meant. There were non-modernist ministers with leanings towards socialist politics, but they did not move in SDAP circles.¹⁴⁷ In accordance with the notion of an antithesis between those ideologies with and those without an explicit Christian basis, which was one of the fundamentals of neo-Calvinist thinking and also a prevailing notion in orthodox Protestant thinking in general, such ministers supported socialist-oriented parties based on Protestant principles, examples of this being the *Bond van Christen-Socialisten* (League of Christian Socialists or BCS) in the 1910s and the *Christelijk-Democratische Unie* (Christian Democratic Union) in the 1920s and 1930s.¹⁴⁸ By referring to the SDAP as a party of schoolteachers, ministers and lawyers instead of labourers, non-socialists not only ridiculed at the SDAP, but also pointed to a trend later observers would confirm: the SDAP, which had never solely consisted of, or solely attracted, workers, became more and more bourgeois – that is to say, its middle-class element increased both in strength

145 Notwithstanding their orthodox Marxist convictions, Rudolf Kuyper and Loopuit were not expelled from the SDAP and decided not to join Gorter’s and Pannekoek’s Communist Party on their own. Kuyper would even correct his idea about the *Blijde Wereld* ministers: in 1912, he wrote that he saw them as full party members, whom he looked at no differently than at other SDAP members. See: H. van Hulst, ‘1920-1930’, in: H. van Hulst, A. Pleysier and A. Scheffer (eds.), *Het Roode Vaandel volgen wij. Geschiedenis van de Sociaaldemocratische Arbeiderspartij van 1880 tot 1940* (The Hague 1969), 87-178, here 64.

146 The ‘s’ was also said to stand for ‘students’ and the ‘d’ for ‘doctors’. See: *Ibid.*, 111. Although the ‘a’ stood for ‘lawyers’ in non-socialists’ nickname for the SDAP, Blom differentiates between schoolteachers, ministers, and *engineers* as the groups representing what he calls ‘intellectual socialism’ within the SDAP. See: Blom, *Frank van der Goes*, 300-301.

147 One exception was a group of orthodox Protestants around Anke van der Vlies (1873-1939), who was known as ‘Enka’. Having laid the foundations of the League of Christian Socialists in 1907, she and several of her fellow league members joined the SDAP in 1912, but decided to return to the BCS in 1918. See: H. Langeveld, *Protestants en progressief. De Christelijk-Democratische Unie 1916-1946* (The Hague 1988), 17.

148 Langeveld, *Protestants en progressief*, 15-19, 304-305.

and influence, particularly at the level of party leadership.¹⁴⁹ In 1919, the *Blijde Wereld* ministers were even in “almost complete” control of party leadership in the province of Friesland.¹⁵⁰

Taking into account one of the main arguments of this study, namely that the modernist movement was a bourgeois phenomenon and therefore exerted little attraction on the working classes, an important finding needs to be stressed. As noted, contrary to Domela's SDB, the SDAP took a ‘neutral’ stance towards individual outlooks on life, treating religion as a private affair. It was less revolutionary, less hostile towards the bourgeoisie and less abhorred by religious people, and therefore more acceptable to modernists, than the early socialist movement led by Domela. In turn, the entry of modernist ministers into the SDAP contributed to the strengthening of the party's bourgeois element. Hence, instead of successfully enlarging the working-class element in the modernist movement, modernists, crucially, contributed to making the SDAP, the party political flagship of the labour movement, the movement that attempted to defend the interests of working-class people, more middle-class, not so much with regard to the party voters, but rather with regard to its ethics, external appearance, and leadership.¹⁵¹ There is an interesting parallel between the social ethics that gained prominence in the SDAP as of the 1910s and those implied in the discourse of the spiritual aristocracy of tutors that was so dominant in modernist circles. In fact, the core idea expressed in this discourse, i.e. that spiritually ‘less developed’ people needed guidance from spiritually ‘more developed’ people (which, as chapter 6 has argued, in practice meant that lower-class people needed guidance from people from higher classes to fulfil themselves as human beings), found a socialist counterpart in the political programme of the SDAP, adopted in 1912:

The proletariat will receive an experience, a scientific and political education, a social and ethical uplift and an expansion and reinforcement of its organisation in and through the class struggle, which will not only enable it to break the antagonism of the ruling class, but will also get it ready for its task of taking up its position [in society].¹⁵²

149 L.J. Altena, ‘Bürger in der Sozialdemokratie. Ihre Bedeutung für die Entwicklung der Sozialdemokratischen Arbeiterpartei (SDAP) in den Niederlanden 1894-1914’, *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* XX.4 (October 1994), 533-548. Altena concludes that the working-class element of the SDAP leadership was largest in the first years after the party's founding. See: *Ibid.*, 538.

150 Wilzen, “De Blijde Wereld” 1902-1932, 64.

151 Wilzen states that it was due to the *Blijde Wereld* ministers' persistent efforts that the climate in the SDAP became less hostile towards religion. See: *Ibid.*, 86.

152 Quoted in: P.J. Troelstra, *Gedenkschriften* III. *Branding* (Amsterdam 1929), 171.

At the time, labourers were thus not yet deemed capable enough of adequately exercising power themselves.¹⁵³ The party, which at the leadership level was dominated by people with a bourgeois background, offered them 'guided experience' to acquire these skills. The SDAP left open the possibility of adding a religious ingredient to this: modernists could hence see the SDAP as a *leerschool* (school) educating people in a *total* way, including ethical-spiritual self-realisation. The liberal Reformed minister W. Banning (1888-1971) would become the great and influential champion of such a 'cultural socialism' as of the 1930s.¹⁵⁴ Thus, modernists did not have to change their outlook on life to be fully accepted in the SDAP. As the view of the *Blijde Wereld* ministers on individual and social reform indicates, and the ethical parallel proposed above suggests, the entry of modernist ministers into the SDAP should accordingly not be seen as a total rejection of the social ethics implied by the dominant modernist discourse as such, but rather as a rejection of the politically liberal politics most modernists took as a consequence of this discourse. It was perhaps (partially) therefore that, in spite of tensions between socialist and politically liberal modernists, which are addressed in more detail below, the feared disintegration of the NPB along political lines never actually occurred.¹⁵⁵

Modernist ministers participating in the labour movement remained a numerically small group, but such men as Bax, Van den Bergh van Eysinga, Van Wijk, and those grouped around *De Blijde Wereld* did make political socialism in general, and the SDAP in particular, more acceptable and more respectable within the modernist movement. They paved the way for other modernists to join socialist political parties and to set up, or support, initiatives with politically socialist leanings. The three most important of these initi-

153 M. Adang, *Voor sociaal-democratie, smaakopvoeding en verheffend genot. De Amsterdamse vereniging "Kunst aan het Volk" (1903-1928)* (Amsterdam 2008), 52.

154 Hartmans characterises Banning's 'cultural socialism' as "a strict, ethical ideal, having a strong ascetic tendency and primarily putting emphasis on the duties every individual had towards society. Because of the high demands made upon the socialist individual, it had a distinctly elitist character, charging the elite with the duty to raise the other members of society to a higher level." See: R. Hartmans, *Vijandige broeders? De Nederlandse sociaal-democratie en het nationaal-socialisme* (Amsterdam 2012), 258. The similarity with the social ethics implied in the dominant modernist discourse is obvious. On cultural socialism in general, see: W.P. Blockmans, "Beziel tot hooger Leven!" Sociaal-democratische cultuurpolitiek in Nederland tijdens het Interbellum', in: J. Berting, J.C. Breman and P.B. Lehning (eds.), *Mensen, macht en maatschappij. Een bundel sociaal-wetenschappelijke opstellen* (Meppel and Amsterdam 1987), 189-209.

155 Van Driel, *Dienaar van twee heren*, 484-489; A.R. de Jong, 'Nu verder', *De Hervorming* 1925-07 (14 February 1925), 52-53, here 53; F.C.M. Boenders, 'Vrijzinnig-godsdienstige liberalen', *Ibid.* 1925-15 (11 April 1925), 114; J. de Louter, 'Oud en nieuw', *Ibid.* 1926-23 (5 June 1926), 177-178, here 178.

atives were the *Religieus-Socialistisch Verbond* (Religious Socialist League or RSV), the *Arbeidersgemeenschap der Woodbrookers* (Woodbrookers Workers' Community), and *Kerk en Vrede* (Church and Peace).

Of the eleven people who convened for the inaugural meeting of the Religious Socialist League, held on 2 January 1915, three had an orthodox Protestant background, two could be counted among the adherents of little religions, while six actively participated in the modernist movement.¹⁵⁶ The RSV wanted to unite all people whose socialist political creed was rooted in a religious conviction, whether they belonged to the SDAP, another party, or to no party at all, and regardless of their exact outlook on life. Moreover, it sought to promote socialism in religious circles, took a stand against the dominant materialistic worldview in socialist circles, and convened meetings on Sunday mornings modelled after church services. These meetings could be seen as a late realisation of the plea some modernists had made for an *arbeiderskerk* (labour church) in the 1890s – not with the intention of founding a new denomination alongside the existing churches, but rather to organise separate services with the particular objective of preventing working-class people from giving up their faith in God, in which a politically socialist message was coupled with religious worship and concrete social activities.¹⁵⁷ Banning, who had joined the SDAP in 1914 and would join the editorial board of *De Blijde Wereld* in 1926, and P. Eldering, a member of the BCS since 1915, would come to hold influential positions in the RSV in the 1920s.¹⁵⁸

From 25 April 1919 onwards, the Woodbrookers' Community of Labourers championed social reform on a socialist basis. As its name indicates, it was embedded within the larger association of 'Woodbrookers'. The latter had come into being in 1908 after several students studying at the theological faculty

156 The modernists in question were the ministers S.K. Bakker, H.W.Ph.E. van den Bergh van Eysinga, J.A. Bruins, Jr., A. van der Heide, M. van Leeuwen Pzn. (1877-1950), and J.J. Meyer. See: 'Redactioneel – Religieus-Socialistisch Verbond', *De Hervorming* 1915-01 (2 January 1915), 6.

157 A. de Koe, 'Een stem uit de Engelsche "Kerk van den Arbeid"', *Ibid.* 1894-49 (8 December 1894), 194; A. van der Heide, 'De "Labour Church"', *Ibid.* 1895-05 (2 February 1895), 18; E.C. Knappert, 'De Engelsche Arbeidskerk', *Ibid.* 1896-37 (12 September 1896), 145-146; 1896-38 (19 September 1896), 149-150; 1896-39 (26 September 1896), 154; 1896-40 (3 October 1896), 157-158; A. van der Heide, 'De Engelsche Arbeiderskerk', *Ibid.* 1896-43 (24 October 1896), 170; Noordeggraaf, 'F.W.N. Hugenholtz als voorganger van de Protestantenbond in Schiedam', 42.

158 For the RSV, see: P.C. Van Gestel, *Het religieus-socialisme* (Leuven 1932), 236-243; Noordeggraaf, *Henri van den Bergh van Eysinga (1868-1920)*, 60-61. Due to Banning, who thought the name '*De Blijde Wereld*' was too 'romantic', the magazine was renamed '*Tijd en Taak*' in 1932.

of Leiden University had visited the Quaker training centre of Woodbrooke in the United Kingdom and, deeply impressed by the spirit of brotherhood, social concern, and simple devoutness they had experienced there, decided to try to bring this 'spirit of Woodbrooke' to the Netherlands. The association of Woodbrookers intended to bring orthodox and modernists together in order to seek a new type of piety transcending theological differences of opinion. In spite of its interdenominational character, it primarily took root in the modernist movement, particularly attracting right-wing modernists. Banning was the central figure in the Woodbrookers' Community of Labourers, and, because he also got involved with *De Blijde Wereld* and the RSV, became the most prominent advocate of Christian socialism in the 1920s and 1930s. He hoped that the labour movement and liberal Christianity would ultimately flow together in perfect symbiosis, in the sense that being a socialist and being a liberal Christian would be two sides of the same coin. Although he was more active on the political level than in the modernist movement, Banning did occasionally express this hope in *De Hervorming*.¹⁵⁹

Founded on 8 October 1924 at the instigation of the Remonstrant theologian G.J. Heering and the liberal Reformed minister J.B.Th. Hugenholtz (1888-1973), the association *Kerk en Vrede* did not, contrary to the *Blijde Wereld* group, the RSV, and the Woodbrookers' Community of Labourers, proclaim that a politically socialist creed was the logical consequence of a Christian creed. Rather, it tried to persuade Christians, irrespective of their theological and ecclesial orientation, that an anti-militarist or pacifist creed was the logical consequence of their religious creed. Yet *Kerk en Vrede* did receive most support from Christians with politically socialist ideas,¹⁶⁰ and, at least before the Second World

159 E.g.: W. Banning, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Krachten der toekomst', *De Hervorming* 1919-35 (30 August 1919), 151-152; W. Banning, 'Godsdienstig gemeenschapsleven – Vrijzinnig hervormde kerkpolitiek en wat er uit volgen kan', *Ibid.* 1924-05 (2 February 1924), 36-38; W. Banning, 'Godsdienst en maatschappij – Socialisme, vrijheid en persoonlijkheid', *Ibid.* 1924-11 (15 March 1924), 83-85. For more on the Woodbrookers' Community of Labourers, see: C. Huijsen, *Socialisme als opdracht. De religieus-socialistische Arbeiders Gemeenschap der Woodbrookers en de PvdA – de geschiedenis van een relatie* (Baarn 1986), 22-29, 45-70.

160 For more detail on the history of *Kerk en Vrede* and modernists' role in it, see: H. van den Berg and T. Coppes, *Dominees in het geweer. Het christen-antimilitarisme van Kerk en Vrede, 1924-1950* (Amersfoort 1982); G.J. van den Boomen, *Honderd jaar vredesbeweging in Nederland* (Amstelveen 1983), 135-146; J. Exalto, "'Dit koninkrijk tartende oorlogsbedrijf". Het christen-antimilitarisme van de rechts-modernist G.J. Heering (1879-1955)', *Documentatieblad voor de Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis na 1800* XXI.49 (December 1998), 23-43, here 26-28; H. Noordegraaf, P. Eldering (1868-1954). *Een radicaal sociale predikant in de Remonstrantse Broederschap* (Gorinchem 2006), 36-40.

War, with liberal Protestant religious views.¹⁶¹ One of its sympathisers was P. Eldering, who regularly argued in *De Hervorming* that Christian, pacifist socialism was the ultimate fulfilment of the Gospel message and as such the religion of the future.¹⁶²

Modernists who became socialists felt that too little was being done in the modernist movement to Christianise society and that this Christianisation could only be realised if the modernist movement allied itself with the labour movement. But socialism was not only a remedy to cure the social timidity of the modernist movement; some socialist modernists also embraced socialism because they derived *religious* inspiration or *spiritual* satisfaction from it, which old-school modernism had been unable to give them. This applied both to modernists who had religious views approaching those of occultists, and right-wing modernists. Although far from all socialist modernists sympathised with right-wing modernism and not every right-wing modernist identified as a socialist, there was an undeniably strong link between being a right-wing modernist and being a socialist modernist, as already recognised by modernists in the 1920s.¹⁶³ The reason for this, as Eldering suggested, was that the theological focus of right-wing modernists on sin, conversion, Christology, and eschatology – themes ignored in old-school modernist theology – came to the fore in a socialist view of society. Christian socialism, he contended, made people realise that social wrongs were a consequence of their innate sinfulness and that these wrongs could accordingly only be eradicated by personal conversion – that is, if they took a stand not only against their own vices, but also against the greed- and selfishness-driven capitalist system. Moreover, Christian socialism was oriented to Christ as a ‘redeemer’, as someone who preached about sin and conversion as defined above, and kept people’s eyes fixed on the eschatological ideal of a new earth, the Kingdom of God.¹⁶⁴

161 Langeveld, *Protestants en progressief*, 120–123.

162 E.g.: P. Eldering, ‘Kerkelijk leven – De predikant als dienaar van het Evangelie’, *De Hervorming* 1923–37 (13 September 1923), 292–294; P. Eldering, ‘Christen-socialisme’, *Ibid.* 1926–25 (19 June 1926), 194–195; 1926–32 (7 August 1926), 250–251. See also: P. Eldering, *De predikant als dienaar van de gemeente, de kerk en het Evangelie. Rede, gehouden op de algemeene vergadering der Remonstrantsche Broederschap* (Hillegom [1923]).

163 E.g.: P. Feenstra, Jr., ‘Ingezonden’, *De Hervorming* 1925–03 (17 January 1925), 21; F.C.M. Boenders, ‘Vereeniging van godsdienstige vrijzinnigen’, *Ibid.* 1925–07 (14 February 1925), 52; F.C.M. Boenders, ‘Vrijzinnig-godsdienstige liberalen’, *Ibid.* 1925–15 (11 April 1925), 114; D. Hans, ‘De sociale taak der kerk’, *Ibid.* 1926–42 (16 October 1926), 332–333; G.H. van Senden, ‘Buitenland – Religieus-socialistische periodieken’, *Ibid.* 1929–07 (13 July 1929), 52.

164 P. Eldering, ‘Christen-socialisme’, *Ibid.* 1926–32 (7 August 1926), 250–251.

Although their numbers were small, socialist modernist ministers made themselves heard loudly and vigorously – to such an extent, that even some modernists with politically liberal sympathies began to feel uncomfortable. Even before 1900, W. Zaalberg and H. Vrendenberg Czn. passionately warned their fellow modernists not to embrace socialism. When the union leader and prohibitionist Th. Postma (1824-1906) asserted in 1884 that the modernist movement was flourishing less than it might have due to the unwillingness of the NPB to defend the material interests of the lower class, Zaalberg promptly raised objection.¹⁶⁵ Together with F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr., who later revised his opinion and became a socialist after his migration to Grand Rapids, Zaalberg argued that it was ‘ethically impossible’ for modernists to support the labour movement: after all, the latter ultimately only cared about the satisfaction of working-class material needs, while the modernist movement aimed for people’s moral uplift.¹⁶⁶ In a series of articles published in 1893, he stressed that modernism was incompatible with *any* form of socialism, because a socialist worldview is inherently statist. The state exists to advance justice, but it was ‘chimerical’ to think that it would ever be able to ensure that everyone could live in the same material conditions. While the sixteenth-century Reformation had liberated people from the chains of the church and modernists had freed people from the chains of confessions of faith, socialists now wanted to throw people into new chains, those of the state.¹⁶⁷ In *Nieuw Leven*, Vrendenberg also struck an anti-socialist note.¹⁶⁸ When it was decided at the general NPB meeting of 1905 that the NPB would continue to subsidise *De Blijde Wereld*, as it had done since 1903, but would discontinue subsidising *Nieuw Leven*, which it had done since the latter publication’s founding in 1887,

165 [Th. Postma in:] ‘Veertiende algemeene vergadering van den Nederl. Protestantenbond’, *De Hervorming* 1884-46 (15 November 1884), 183-185, here 185; Th. Postma, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Repliek’, *Ibid.* 1884-49 (6 December 1884), 197; 1884-52 (27 December 1884), 210.

166 [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘Een eisch van het materialistisch socialisme afgewezen’, *Ibid.* 1884-47 (22 November 1884), 187; W. Zaalberg, ‘Binnenland – Bij brood alleen niet’, *Ibid.* 1885-01 (3 January 1885), 2-3.

167 W. Zaalberg, ‘Christelijk socialisme’, *Ibid.* 1893-21 (27 May 1893), 81-82; 1893-22 (3 June 1893), 85-85; W. Zaalberg, ‘Nog eens: Christelijk socialisme’, *Ibid.* 1893-29 (22 July 1893), 114; W. Zaalberg, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1893-34 (26 August 1893), 136.

168 To the indignation of modernists with socialist leanings. E.g.: [J. van Loenen Martinet], “Nieuw Leven” belasterd?, *Ibid.* 1899-48 (2 December 1899), 197; A.W. van Wijk, ‘Ingezonden stukken – De bond en “Nieuw Leven”’, *Ibid.* 1900-47 (24 November 1900), 366; F. Spiekman, ‘Ingezonden stukken – “Nieuw Leven”’, *Ibid.* 1903-12 (21 March 1903), 94.

Vrendenberg felt confirmed in his opinion that the NPB was gradually turning into a socialist association.¹⁶⁹

Similar complaints were uttered many times thereafter. In 1907, for example, C.J. Niemeijer stated that the widely publicised activities of socialist ministers made people ill-disposed, rather than sympathetic towards, the modernist movement, even causing some modernists to distance themselves from it. It was therefore particularly lamentable that *De Hervorming* often-times 'coquetted' with socialism.¹⁷⁰ This last accusation was increasingly heard after the radical editorial transformation of *De Hervorming* in 1918.¹⁷¹ B.D. Eerdmans repeatedly blamed the social democrat A. van der Hoeve for misusing his position as co-editor of *De Hervorming* to champion socialist politics. Van der Hoeve's politicised writings, Eerdmans argued, had as their consequence that "more and more, a socialist stamp is being set on the NPB."¹⁷² According to the lawyer J. Frima (1890-1944), Van der Hoeve's editorial colleague H.T. de Graaf also helped bring it about that the NPB "is more and more identified with socialists and communists, which is no surprise, as [...] the 'red' ministers are only too happy to beat the big drum."¹⁷³ F.C.M. Boenders was of the same mind: in the church, the NPB, *De Hervorming* and other magazines, politically liberal modernists were being shouted down by their socialist co-religionists. He therefore urged politically like-minded modernists to present themselves more explicitly as *liberals*.¹⁷⁴ H.Y. Groenewegen was dissatisfied with the 'loudness' of the socialist minority in the modernist movement as well: having lost "many of its best readers and contributors" due to the socialist-minded editorial course that Van Loenen Martinet steered in the 1890s, *De Hervorming*, he suggested in 1925, should have never published articles in support of socialist

169 [H. Vrendenberg Cz. in: B.D. Eerdmans], 'Berichten, enz. – Twee opmerkingen over de algemeene vergadering', *De Hervorming* 1905-45 (11 November 1905), 356-357, here 357; [H. Vrendenberg Cz. in:] 'Berichten, enz. – Een valsche voorstelling bestreden', *Ibid.* 1905-50 (16 December 1905), 397.

170 C.J. Niemeijer, 'Kroniek', *Teekenen des Tijds* IX (1907), 224-239, here 234.

171 See also: Krijger, 'Een vrijzinnige "meneer"', 54.

172 [B.D. Eerdmans in:] *Jaarboek NPB* 1921, 19. See also: A.H. van der Hoeve, 'Bondsleven – Van een debat', *De Hervorming* 1920-44 (6 November 1920), 175; B.D. Eerdmans, 'Ingezonden – De inleiding op het jaarverslag', *Ibid.* 1920-45 (13 November 1920), 178-179; A.H. van der Hoeve, 'Ingezonden – Aanteekening', *Ibid.* 1920-45 (13 November 1920), 179.

173 J. Frima, 'Godsdienst en maatschappij', *Ibid.* 1923-47 (24 November 1923), 371-372, here 372.

174 F.C.M. Boenders, 'Godsdienst en maatschappij – Vereeniging van godsdienstige vrijzinnigen', *Ibid.* 1924-52 (27 December 1924), 413-414; F.C.M. Boenders, 'Vereeniging van godsdienstige vrijzinnigen', *Ibid.* 1925-07 (14 February 1925), 52; F.C.M. Boenders, 'Vrijzinnig-godsdienstige liberalen', *Ibid.* 1925-15 (11 April 1925), 114.

politics.¹⁷⁵ The liberal- and modernist-minded jurist J. de Louter (1847-1932), to name a last example, chided all modernist preachers who sowed discord among modernists by mixing their religious message with a political one.¹⁷⁶ Although, as said before, the modernist movement did not fall apart, socialism did affect its already fragile unity: some NPB branches and modernist-oriented congregations began to show a preference for preachers with socialist leanings, while others barred socialists from their pulpits.¹⁷⁷

5 The Modernist Movement and Socialism: An Evaluation

The turn of some towards socialism thus caused tensions within the modernist movement. But did it also make the 'gap' that modernists had perceived between their movement and the working classes in the late nineteenth century any smaller? The answer can only be in the negative. The lament that the modernist movement failed to reach working-class people could still be heard in the first decades of the twentieth century.¹⁷⁸ It is always difficult to determine why someone develops certain religious and political views during their life. This development is dependent on both external and internal factors, the exact proportions of which are different for every individual. Yet, looking solely at the modernist movement itself, four reasons can be discerned to explain why the working-class element continued to be underrepresented in the modernist movement in spite of the rise of a politically socialist current within it.

First, due to the anti-religious, anti-modernist, materialistic, and revolutionary language that Domela Nieuwenhuis and other socialist opinion leaders, particularly before 1900, integrated into their socialist message, as well as to the identification of political liberalism, the 'guardian' of capitalism, with reli-

175 H.Y. Groenewegen, "De Hervorming" 50 jaar', *De Hervorming* 1925-50 (12 December 1925), 393-394, here 394.

176 J. de Louter, 'Oud en nieuw', *Ibid.* 1926-23 (5 June 1926), 177-178, here 178.

177 E.g.: S.K. Bakker, 'Afscheiding?', *Ibid.* 1907-25 (22 June 1907), 194-196; H.A.J. van Wijhe, 'Ingezonden stukken – Een nieuwe antithese?', *Ibid.* 1908-45 (7 November 1908), 358-359; G. Horreüs de Haas, 'Godsdienst en maatschappij – De arbeiderswereld, de religie en de kerk', *Ibid.* 1921-06 (12 February 1921), 44-46, here 44.

178 E.g.: H.P. Schim van der Loeff, 'De Commissie voor de Geschriften', *Ibid.* 1907-27 (6 July 1907), 211-212, here 212; G.A. van den Bergh van Eysinga, 'Redelijke godsdienstprediking', *Ibid.* 1908-19 (9 May 1908), 146-147, here 147; H. Vrendenberg Cz., 'Onkerkelijk of ongodsdiensstig?', *Ibid.* 1917-09 (3 March 1917), 70; H.T. de Graaf, 'Godsdienst en maatschappij – Om de ziel der arbeiders', *Ibid.* 1921-20 (21 May 1921), 155-157, here 155.

gious modernism, a negative image of the modernist movement had become firmly established in working-class circles.¹⁷⁹

Second, this image persisted and was hard to get rid of, all the more since leading modernist opinion makers (had) themselves reinforced this image by distancing themselves from the labour movement in general and political socialism in particular for a long time. Judging by the oratory and style of men such as Domela, these modernists regarded socialism as vulgar, unethical, atheistic, and a threat to personal development. As a result, a negative image of socialism, in turn, persisted in the modernist movement.

Third, the group of modernists who came to embrace political socialism was too small to change either of these images. Moreover, among modernists, active involvement in socialist (party) politics was almost exclusively limited to a handful of ministers.¹⁸⁰ The fear that the modernist movement would turn 'red' was therefore, numerically speaking, unfounded. It might have *seemed* as if modernists with politically socialist leanings began to outnumber those with politically liberal leanings, because the former expressed their political convictions more clearly and more loudly than the latter. If they had been successful, however, the initiatives of socialist modernists to enlarge the working-class element in their movement, such as 'labour churches' and 'religious socialist worship meetings', would not have reduced the aforementioned gap, since these would not have fully *integrated* labourers into the modernist movement. Envisioned or organised *next* to regular church services, these initiatives would instead have put blue-collar workers in a separate class-based 'compartment'.¹⁸¹ Moreover, instead of making the modernist movement more 'proletarian', modernist ministers who joined the SDAP actually contributed to a 're-orientation' process in the party, prompting it to acknowledge that socialism had an ethical rather than a materialistic basis, and culminating in the 1930s in Banning's influential 'cultural socialism'.¹⁸²

179 S.K. Bakker, *Het christen-socialisme* (Baarn 1909), 25-26; [J.T. Tenthoff in:] 'Berichten, enz. – De Noord-Hollandsche Predikantenvereniging', *De Hervorming* 1909-27 (3 July 1909), 213-214, here 213.

180 Hoenderdaal, 'Het vrijzinnig protestantisme tussen de schaduwen van gisteren en morgen', 219.

181 Fully in accordance with the ethics implied in the discourse of the spiritual aristocracy of tutors, the Religious Socialist League wanted to give 'ethical guidance' to labourers. See: C. van der Pol, 'Godsdienstig gemeenschapsleven – Naar aanleiding van "een moeilijk vraagstuk"', *De Hervorming* 1924-28 (12 July 1924), 219-220, here 220.

182 F. de Jong Edz., *"Wij willen ellende wenden." Een eeuw sociaal-demokratische antwoorden op maatschappelijke uitdagingen* (Amsterdam 1984), 45.

Fourth, and finally, there was no (spiritual) necessity for blue-collar workers to join the modernist movement. The Roman Catholics and orthodox Protestants among them professed a religion based on a notion of exclusive salvation: only by staying in the church and by leading their lives in accordance with the principles of their religion could they hope to attain redemption. Because their loyalty towards their own religious community was therefore, on the whole, greater than their solidarity with labourers outside of their religious community, Roman Catholics and orthodox Protestants were, in accordance with the directive of their religious leaders, loath to join the SDAP or socialist unions.¹⁸³ But this did not apply to blue-collar workers who were neither Roman Catholic nor orthodox Protestant. For them, socialism *itself* functioned as a 'substitute' for religion,¹⁸⁴ as an all-encompassing worldview and outlook on life that had no need for liberal Protestant conceptions of faith.¹⁸⁵

Although the lack of wide appeal of the modernist movement was mostly regretted, some modernists interpreted it as a confirmation of the 'superiority' of liberal Protestantism. At the meeting of modernist ministers in the northern provinces of 1916, J.J. Bleeker argued that

the relative unpopularity of the modernist movement [...] is absolutely no proof of [its] religious inferiority. In most cases, its lack of success with the masses rather is a sign of the contrary. It is the fault of many that people judge the value of a [religious] movement too much by exterior things, primarily by the frequency with which its adherents attend church. The more modernism does justice to religion in its purest form, the more popular it will probably not become, but the power and blessing it emanates will become bigger.¹⁸⁶

183 G.J. Harmsen and B. Reinalda, *Voor de bevrijding van de arbeid. Beknopte geschiedenis van de Nederlandse vakbeweging* (Nijmegen 1975), 328; A. Lijphart, *Verzuiling, pacificatie en kentering in de Nederlandse politiek* (Amsterdam [1968] 2007), 49.

184 Kruijt, *De onkerkelijkheid in Nederland*, 190-191; A.J.C. Rüter, *De spoorwegstakingen van 1903. Een spiegel der arbeidersbeweging in Nederland* (Leiden 1935), 22-27.

185 Exemplary in this respect is J.A. Fortuijn's exclamation, uttered during a public discussion with the minister W. Bax in 1890, that modernism was something socialists could do without, as it was utterly useless to them. See: [J.A. Fortuijn in:] 'Binnenland', *Recht voor Allen* xii.303 (25 December 1890), 2.

186 [J.J. Bleeker in:] 'Redactioneel – Samenkomst van moderne predikanten in de drie noordelijke provinciën', *De Hervorming* 1916-36 (2 September 1916), 308. See also: J.J. Bleeker, 'De betrekkelijke impopulariteit der moderne richting', *Teekenen des Tijds* xix (1917), 118-138.

In 1931, D. Drijver affirmed this: “the more our Protestantism wants to be purely spiritual, the less it will be able to attract the general public.”¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁷ D. Drijver, ‘Binnenland – Waar ligt de oorzaak?’, *De Hervorming* 1931-05 (9 May 1931), 33.

Captivating the Intellectual Class

1 A Bourgeois Movement

In Boston in 1907, during the fourth in a series of international congresses of religious liberals with which chapter 11 deals in more detail, the Remonstrant theologian H.Y. Groenewegen gave a short speech on the condition and perspectives of liberal Protestantism in the Netherlands. Due to an alliance of orthodox, primarily Kuyperian, Calvinists and Roman Catholics that was as “monstrous” as it was “powerful,” a false antithesis between self-proclaimed ‘true’ Christians on the one hand, and those whom these Christians branded ‘heathens’ on the other, had come to divide Dutch society and politics. Nearly half of the population, Groenewegen contended, was susceptible to this antithetical rhetoric and ranked itself among the ‘true’ Christians. Yet this did not mean that the other half of the population, the ‘heathens’ in orthodox Calvinist and Catholic parlance, was susceptible to liberal Protestantism. Those with a leading position within this half, and thus able to influence public opinion, did not actively support the modernist movement in challenging orthodox Calvinists’ and Roman Catholics’ antithetical rhetoric, Groenewegen noted with regret. Among liberal politicians and public school teachers, he felt that an indifferent or even hostile attitude towards religion prevailed. As chapter 9 shows, Groenewegen was certainly not alone in this feeling. Moreover, he stated,

among our most important artists, poets, and prose writers, there are many who do not hesitate to express their religious thoughts and feelings, and most of these are far from any orthodoxy. But very few of them show sympathy with us, strive after nearer relations with our ministers and scholars, or appear in our churches, even when our best preachers, who are artists in their way, are in the pulpit.¹

Though not orthodox, the trendsetters in the so-called ‘intellectual’ or ‘cultured’ class were thus not very favourably disposed towards the modernist movement either. The question is: why?

¹ H.Y. Groenewegen, ‘Conditions and Outlook of Liberal Religions in Holland’, in: C.W. Wendte (ed.), *Freedom and Fellowship in Religion. Proceedings and Papers of the Fourth International Congress of Religious Liberals* (Boston s.a.), 165–171, here 165–167.

In the late 1850s and 1860s, when their movement was just beginning to take shape, modernists had no doubt whatsoever that the modernist movement would gain a firm foothold in the cultured class, among those to whom they later referred as 'intellectuals'.² However, as early as the 1870s, complaints could be heard that intellectuals' interest and involvement in religious life was rather low.³ From that moment onwards, articles on the relationship between the modernist movement and intellectuals read like an endless jeremiad. In an exemplary article in *De Hervorming* in early 1894, W.C. van Manen observed with disappointment that there was not only "still much dislike of 'modernists' in the circles of the socially and intellectually less fortunate," but also that "the initially, as it seemed to be, exceptionally ardent and unanimous [affection] among the most highly developed [people] for the modernist movement and the enlightenment it set in motion is flagging in a worrying way."⁴ There is something of particular interest about Van Manen's article: it illustrates a trend that would intensify in the decades to come. Whereas the decreasing interest of intellectuals in the modernist movement had been recognised previously,⁵ it more and more came to be juxtaposed with the lack of low-class support for the modernist movement from the end of the nineteenth century onwards.⁶ Simultaneously, modernists began to devise plans to recover intellectuals' interest in their movement. In 1907, an anonymous article writer in *De Hervorming* even advised the NPB to no longer try to get a stronger position in the lower classes by seeking alliance with the socialist labour movement, but

2 E.g.: R. Houwink, *De kerk en de intellectuelen* (Assen [1932]).

3 E.g.: Zaalberg, *De Nederlandsche Protestantenbond*, 5-7; 'Volharden', *De Hervorming* 1878-35 (31 August 1878), 1. Also stated in: [P. Eldering], 'Redactioneel – Openingswoord van den voorzitter der moderne vergadering', *Ibid.* 1916-20 (13 May 1916), 167-168, here 168.

4 W.C. van Manen, '1869 – Januari – 1894', *Ibid.* 1894-04 (27 January 1894), 14-15, here 14.

5 E.g.: 'Volharden', *Ibid.* 1878-35 (31 August 1878), 1; [L.W.E. Rauwenhoff in:] S. Cramer, 'Wat in maart gebeurt', *Ibid.* 1880-13 (27 March 1880), 50; [J.J. van Hille in:] J. de Louter, 'Eene ernstige vraag', *Ibid.* 1887-52 (24 December 1887), 206.

6 E.g.: Zaalberg, *Realisme of idealisme zonder ideaal?*, 16; [I. van den Bergh in:] 'Binnenland – De algemeene vergadering', *De Hervorming* 1891-46 (14 November 1891), 181-182, here 181; Een vrijzinnige, 'Over vrijzinnig Christendom in Nederland', *Ibid.* 1907-14 (6 April 1907), 105-107, here 106; E.M. ten Cate, 'Door de woestijn', *Ibid.* 1907-29 (20 July 1907), 225-226, here 225; G.A. van den Bergh van Eysinga, 'Redelijke godsdienstprediking', *Ibid.* 1908-19 (9 May 1908), 146-147, here 147; F. Dijkema, 'Verandering in onze godsdienstprediking?', *Ibid.* 1914-09 (28 February 1914), 71; [P. Eldering], 'Redactioneel – Openingswoord van den voorzitter der moderne vergadering', *Ibid.* 1916-20 (13 May 1916), 167-168, here 168; J.J. Bleeker, 'Hoofdartikelen – Wat mankeert er toch aan ons?', *Ibid.* 1917-04 (27 January 1917), 27-28, here 27; 1917-05 (3 February 1917), 35-36; H. Oort, 'Hoofdartikelen – De waarde van het geloof in God', *Ibid.* 1917-11 (17 March 1917), 86-87, here 86; K. Vos, 'Ingezonden – Teekenen des tijds', *Ibid.* 1917-50 (15 December 1917), 419-420, here 419.

to “win over the so-called trendsetters of the nation to liberal Christianity” instead. After all, although the modernist movement was concerned about “the entire nation,” it was ultimately always “the tail that follows, with only a few exceptions, the path, the direction that the head is taking.”⁷ In other words, if the NPB really wanted to be socially relevant, it should target those who set the pace in intellectual life. After much debate, the NPB picked up this suggestion ten years later. As of 1918, *De Hervorming*, it was decided, would primarily target the university-trained elite in an attempt to influence intellectual life. However, as related in chapter 2, this attempt utterly failed: the gap between intellectuals and modernists had simply become too big to be bridged.⁸

Because the modernist movement did not manage to attract a large following in the lower classes and in the intellectual-cultural ‘upper’ class, it continued to rely on bourgeois support.⁹ Modernists recognised and deplored this, yet struggled to make sense of it.¹⁰ Groenewegen, for example, attributed the lack of intellectuals in the modernist ranks to the intellectuals themselves: in his 1907 Boston speech, he suggested that intellectuals did not bother to seek contact with modernist ministers and scholars. In 1926, Pl. van den Berg reasoned along similar lines: intellectuals haughtily looked down upon everything ‘bourgeois’ and therefore thought themselves to be ‘too good’ to join the bourgeois NPB.¹¹ In these explanations, self-criticism is entirely absent, and potential causes of the unpopularity of liberal Protestantism itself

7 Een vrijzinnige, ‘Over vrijzinnig Christendom in Nederland’, *De Hervorming* 1907-14 (6 April 1907), 105-107, here 106. The writer identified himself as the author of a small booklet, titled ‘*Aan wie de schuld, zoo Rome en Dordt spoedig weer zegevieren?*’, published in Leeuwarden in 1906. He signed both this booklet and the article in *De Hervorming* as “a liberal.”

8 According to Hulsman, religious liberals in the Dutch Reformed Church in particular had alienated themselves from intellectuals, due to their ideal of the *volkskerk*. While Reformed liberals tried to permeate the lower classes with a liberal Protestant spirit through the institution of the Dutch Reformed Church, intellectuals, Hulsman claimed, did not bother to reach out to the masses – because they felt that every attempt to uplift the masses was a waste of effort – and disliked tradition-bound church life. See: G. Hulsman, ‘De intellectueelen en de kerk’, *De Stroom* VIII.36 (10 August 1929), 2-3, here 2.

9 [F. Kuiper in:] ‘Godsdienst en stand’, *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* LXXXIV.324 (23 November 1927), morning paper B, 2; Noordhoff, *Vrijzinnig protestantisme en onkerkelijkheid*, 32; Hoenderdaal, ‘Het vrijzinnig protestantisme tussen de schaduwen van gisteren en morgen’, 169.

10 E.g.: C.E. Hooykaas, ‘Godsdienstig leven in Nederland CCXX. Expansie in den Protestantenbond’, *Algemeen Handelsblad* xc.28963 (7 November 1917), evening paper, 5; K. Vos, ‘Ingezonden – Teekenen des tijds’, *De Hervorming* 1917-50 (15 December 1917), 419-420; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, ‘Gesteldheden en verwachtingen betreffende het vrijzinnig protestantisme’, *De Smidse* VIII.7/8 (July/August 1933), 193-205, here 197.

11 Pl. van den Berg, ‘Ingezonden – Enquête over gemeentelieven’, *De Hervorming* 1926-25 (19 June 1926), 197.

are ignored. The historians Harinck and Winkeler do look for such a cause. They argue that, although it hoped to stop the widening gap between Christianity and modern culture, the modernist movement alienated the intellectual class from church life precisely by emphasizing that such a gap existed.¹² This explanation fits the paradigm that modernism was a transitional phase between involvement in church life and church abandonment or even irreli-gion. It implies that intellectuals docilely complied with orthodoxy before the genesis of the modernist movement. Yet dogmatic latitudinarianism was not a phenomenon that only came into existence in the nineteenth century. Another explanation is therefore needed. Instead of estranging intellectuals by its insistence on the large gap between Christianity and modern culture, the modernist movement was, on the contrary, unable to preserve a strong position in intellectual circles because of its failure to bridge this gap and, even more importantly, because it actually maintained and widened this gap. As this chapter shows, modernist discourse and the stands to which it led were responsible for the inability of the modernist movement to safeguard the continued interest of intellectuals.

2 Modernism in Intellectual Life

Within the Dutch cultured class, publicists were the ones who left the strongest stamp on public opinion. Significantly, most modernist ministers who resigned their ministerial position thereafter entirely devoted themselves to literature.¹³ Some of them, such as M.A.N. Rovers, who gave up his position as a Dutch Reformed minister in 1878 because of irreconcilable grievances over existing church life,¹⁴ and J.A. Tours, who stepped down from ministry in 1883 due to doubts about the immortality of the soul,¹⁵ continued to sympathise with the modernist movement. The same went for ministers as A.E.F. Junod, who left the Lutheran Church in disappointment in 1919 during a second 'wave' of modernist resignations.¹⁶ Others, however, went on to become modernism's

12 Harinck and Winkeler, 'De negentiende eeuw', 671-673.

13 Buitenwerf-van der Molen, *God van vooruitgang*, 77, note 3.

14 Rovers explained his resignation in: *Gedachtenis. Eerste en laatste toespraak, gehouden te Krommenie op 16 September 1877 en 3 November 1878* (Krommenie 1878).

15 Tours justified his resignation in: *Twee toespraken, ter rechtvaardiging van het nederleggen zijner betrekking* (Deventer 1883).

16 A short report on Junod's motivation for leaving the Lutheran Church is given in: 'Kerknieuws – Afscheid ds. Junod', *De Telegraaf* XXVII.10611 (30 September 1919), even-ing paper, 10.

fiercest critics. Two of them, who permanently withdrew from their ministerial office in the early 1860s, were among the most important and most influential opinion makers of the last half of the nineteenth century: A. Pierson and C. Busken Huet.¹⁷ Similarly to F. Domela Nieuwenhuis, the ex-modernist minister who was in large part responsible for the negative stereotyping of modernists in the socialist movement, the former modernist ministers Pierson and Busken Huet contributed to giving modernism a bad name in intellectual, literary circles.

In her 2007 dissertation, Buitenwerf-van der Molen emphasises the significance of Pierson's and Busken Huet's transition from the pulpit to the writing table. Their career switch had significant consequences for the further development of the modernist movement. Their decision was not only a powerful weapon in the hands of orthodoxy, which was strengthened in its conviction that modernism inevitably led to unbelief; beyond this, Pierson and Busken Huet themselves also took up arms against their former fellow modernists. In essence, they accused modernists of being dishonest with themselves: Pierson and Busken Huet had both come to understand that the ultimate consequence of modernism should be a clean break with the church and Christianity.¹⁸

Years after his resignation, Pierson began to look at orthodoxy with a certain sympathy, of which he gave evidence in a series of articles published under the title 'Oudere Tijdgenooten' ('Older Contemporaries') in the influential literary journal *De Gids* (*The Guide*) between 1882 and 1886.¹⁹ In this last year, briefly after the outbreak of the *Doleantie*, he even wrote an article in *De Gids* in which he praised the Kuypertian movement for its ecclesial activities.²⁰ His critique on the modernist movement, by contrast, did not fundamentally change after the publication of his book *De moderne richting en de kristelijke kerk* (*The Modernist Movement and the Christian Church*) in 1866. In this study, which was

17 C.G.N. de Vooy, *Allard Pierson naast en tegenover Conrad Busken Huet* (Groningen and Batavia 1941), 3, 34.

18 Buitenwerf-van der Molen, *God van vooruitgang*, 77–93.

19 A. Pierson, *Oudere tijdgenooten* (Amsterdam 1888); A. Pierson (J. Trapman ed.), *Tussen religieus gevoel en kritisch denken. Vijf Franse preken* (Hilversum 2014), 14.

20 A. Pierson, 'Oudere tijdgenooten iv. Bilderdijk, een der vaders van het Réveil', *De Gids* L (1886), 397–453, here 438–440; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Dr. A. Pierson en – dr. A. Pierson', *De Hervorming* 1886–12 (20 March 1886), 47. Pierson praised the Kuypertian movement for its concern for the church. In the 1870s, he had come to appreciate the church as an institution for popular edification. See: C. Molenberg, 'Het allerheiligst ongelooft. Allard Pierson tussen moderne theologie en humanisme', in: P.H.J.M. Derkx et al. (ed.), *Voor menselijkheid of tegen godsdienst? Humanisme in Nederland, 1850–1960* (Hilversum 1998), 51–58, here 62.

part of a pamphlet war following his resignation, Pierson accused A. Réville, and all modernists as well, of clinging to the church while wanting to destroy everything that separates a church from any given voluntary association.²¹ The church had been founded on a supernaturalist basis, which modernists explicitly rejected. Specifically speaking about the Dutch Reformed Church, Pierson suggested that orthodoxy had the right to claim to be this ecclesial body, as they “generally adhere to the worldview on which the Dutch Reformed Church has initially been founded.”²² Moreover, Jesus himself had been a supernaturalist.²³ The prolonged ecclesial ‘cohabitation’ of supernaturalist orthodoxy and anti-supernaturalist modernists could not be justified on epistemological grounds and was detrimental to the development of both. Since, according to Pierson, antisupernaturalism did not correspond with the philosophy of life of the Nazarene in whose footsteps modernists wanted to follow, the latter could only maintain their pretention about being a Christian and ecclesial movement by being unfaithful to Jesus and dishonest to themselves.²⁴

There is much more to say about the development of Pierson’s thoughts and career as a publicist after the publication of *De moderne richting en de kristelijke kerk*. Although he could no longer call himself a Christian, he began to show more and more signs of emotional attachment to the devotional side of Christianity, particularly in its mildly pietistic form.²⁵ He continued to blame modernists for being inconsistent and insincere by paying lip service to Christian ideas and practices while actually ‘subverting’ historical Christianity. Modernism could only be legitimised and defended, Pierson insisted,

21 Pierson’s book was a direct response to: A. Réville, *Nous maintiendrons. Lettre au Dr. A. Pierson à l’occasion de ses adieux à sa dernière église* (Arnhem 1865) [also published as: *Wij blijven. Brief aan dr. A. Pierson, naar aanleiding van zijn schrijven “Aan zijne laatste gemeente”* (Arnhem 1865)]. Réville’s book was a response to: A. Pierson, *Aan zijne laatste gemeente* (Arnhem 1865). The publication of Pierson’s *De moderne richting en de kristelijke kerk* was followed by: A. Réville, *Notre foi et notre droit. Un dernier mot en réponse à M. le dr. Pierson* (Arnhem 1866) [also published as: *Ons geloof en ons regt. Een laatste woord ter beantwoording van dr. A. Pierson* (Arnhem 1866)]; C. Busken Huet, *Ongevraagd advies, in de zaak van Pierson tegen Réville c.s.* (Haarlem 1866); Kuenen, *Het goed recht der modernen*; Jan Rap, *Heeft Pierson gelijk? Eene vraag tot de aanhangers der moderne theologie gericht* (’s-Hertogenbosch 1866); A. Pierson, *Gods wondermacht en ons geestelijk leven* (Arnhem 1867); R.J. Jungius, *De zedelijke bestemming van het individu, naar aanleiding van dr. Pierson’s laatste brochure “Gods wondermacht en ons geestelijk leven”* (Doesburg 1867); Scholten, *Supranaturalisme in verband met Bijbel, Christendom en protestantisme*.

22 Pierson, *De moderne richting en de kristelijke kerk*, 31.

23 *Ibid.*, 50–53.

24 *Ibid.*, 63–68.

25 Trapman, *Het land van Erasmus*, 101.

by means of mental leaps. He elaborately substantiated this claim in *Gods wondermacht en ons geestelijk leven* (*God's Miraculous Power and Our Spiritual Life*), published in 1867. His critique that the ultimate justification of religious belief could not, as modernists had contended so far, be based on logic or empiricism,²⁶ met with some response and contributed to the rise of short-lived 'ethical modernism'.²⁷ However, he did not sympathise with this current in any way whatsoever – the mutual alienation between Pierson and the modernist movement was permanent.²⁸ One of the best examples thereof is the dispute that Pierson and Kuenen fought out with each other in the *Theologisch Tijdschrift* in 1876. The immediate cause of this dispute was the publication of *Eene levensbeschouwing* (*A Philosophy of Life*), in which Pierson called himself an 'abstentionist', someone who finds religious inspiration in human life itself while leaving theological questions unanswered.²⁹ Kuenen chided Pierson for identifying true Christianity with the pietistic "exaggeration" of Christianity in which he was raised, thereby doing injustice to a modernist understanding of religion.³⁰ The latter, in turn, accused modernists such as Kuenen of reacting to his 'abstentionism' in the same angst-ridden way as orthodox men such as I. da Costa (1798-1860) had reacted twenty years before to the rise of modernism. Whereas Da Costa had wanted to protect the verbatim word of Scripture against historical-critical research, Kuenen now echoed Da Costa by pouring out his wrath over everyone who questioned the existence of a higher force or principle in nature.³¹

During the controversy following his resignation, Pierson received public support from Conrad Busken Huet. In a brochure titled '*Ongevraagd advies*' ('*Unasked-for Advice*'), which the historian Trapman calls "a radical denunciation of modern theology as such,"³² Huet characterised modernists as hypocrites. His criticism was basically the same as Pierson's, but the words he used

26 Pierson summarised his argument as follows: "The mortal contradiction in the main dogma of modernist theology is this: God is Father [and] Sovereign, two concepts that exclude each other." Quoted from: Pierson, *Gods wondermacht en ons geestelijk leven*, 89.

27 Roessingh, *De moderne theologie in Nederland*, 205.

28 However, in the late 1880s and early 1890s, Pierson did occasionally lecture at the Free Congregation.

29 K.H. Boersema, *Allard Pierson. Eene cultuur-historische studie* (The Hague 1924), 263-292; A.L. Molendijk, 'De levensbeschouwing van Allard Pierson', *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift* LXV.1 (2011), 18-36.

30 A. Kuenen, 'Ideaalvorming', *Theologisch Tijdschrift* x (1876), 316-361, here 347.

31 A. Pierson, 'Kantteekeningen op Prof. Kuenen's "Ideaalvorming"', *Ibid.* x (1876), 404-468, here 459-461.

32 Pierson (Trapman ed.), *Tussen religieus gevoel en kritisch denken*, 31.

were so harsh that even Pierson was shocked.³³ If modernists were honest, Huet asserted, they could not but acknowledge that they did not deserve to be in the church nor to call themselves 'Christians'. Their aspiration to have a position between freethinkers and the orthodox faithful was only possible via a sanctimonious and deceitful word play: clinging to, while actually reformulating, Christian terminology. This, Huet argued, did not serve progress. A thorough reformation of church life would therefore not be brought about by modernists, despite the their rhetoric.³⁴

Busken Huet illustrated his argument by 'naming and shaming'. Réville, who had been the first to take up the gauntlet against Pierson, failed to see that the way in which modernists tried to harmonise 'believing' and 'knowing' could ultimately only result in a subordination of faith to reason or a subordination of reason to faith.³⁵ Kuenen, who had stated that a firm belief in God, Jesus Christ, the Gospel of God's grace in Christ, and the principle of the freedom of investigation was a prerequisite for being a minister in the Dutch Reformed Church, exemplified the fraudulence of modernism: his views on 'God', 'Jesus Christ', and the 'Gospel' were diametrically opposed to the dogmatic foundations of the Dutch Reformed Church, whereas, according to Huet, freedom of investigation had been acquired in spite of, rather than thanks to, ecclesial Protestantism. Rauwenhoff, whom Busken Huet described as vain and attacked with more vehemence than all other modernists, was "insipid," because he recognised the absurdity of state-subsidised theological faculties that exclusively trained ministers for the Dutch Reformed Church, but refused to draw the only obvious conclusion in this regard: instead of abandoning his chair at the theological faculty in Leiden, Rauwenhoff "confines himself to uttering and recommending pious wishes, and quietly waits to see whether these wishes are to be fulfilled." Scholten, whose student Busken Huet had been, deluded himself by pretending to be a true disciple of John Calvin: his redefinition of Calvinist concepts was nothing less than "a violation of historical truth."³⁶ In sum, whereas Pierson was open-minded enough to further develop his ideas and had showed character by leaving the church, his modernist adversaries were unwilling to critically reconsider their convictions and could only stay in the church at the expense of truth and sincerity.³⁷

33 S.A. Naber, *Allard Pierson herdacht* (Haarlem 1897), 63-66; O.J. Praamstra, *Busken Huet. Een biografie* (Amsterdam 2007), 404.

34 Busken Huet, *Ongevraagd advies*, 65-66, 74-76.

35 *Ibid.*, 28-33.

36 *Ibid.*, 49-62.

37 *Ibid.*, 51, 62-63.

Modernists were furious,³⁸ which strengthened Busken Huet in his opinion that they were just as 'orthodox' – that is, indisposed to be self-critical – in their persuasion as those against whom modernists positioned themselves. Huet, who did not stay as involved with theology as Pierson, criticised modernism once again in an 1880 short story, albeit considerably less harsh and in a less direct way than in his *Ongevraagd advies*.³⁹ Looking back upon his first years in a rural village, the protagonist of this story, a modernist minister, acknowledges that his liberal religious views and the way in which he had propagated these had been too incomprehensible for his peasant congregation. Feeling that he would have fitted better in an urban congregation, where he would have found "an audience of more developed people, of women and men who, just as myself, saw the reconciliation of Christianity and civilisation as the most important issue of the century and modern theology as the providential solution thereof," he decided to target the small circle of village dignitaries, who belonged to the same social class as he did.⁴⁰ By putting these statements in the mouth of his story's protagonist, Huet implicitly blamed the early modernist movement for its pretentiousness and complacency, and for its inability and lack of serious effort to make itself clear enough to win over the faithful to its ideas.⁴¹

E.J. Potgieter (1808-1875), one of Busken Huet's closest friends, completely agreed with what Busken Huet wrote in his *Ongevraagd advies*. Potgieter was one of the founding fathers of the literary and cultural monthly *De Gids*, which had rapidly become the most influential Dutch periodical after its first appearance in 1837.⁴² As such, he had a leading position in Dutch intellectual life in the second and third quarters of the nineteenth century. In the words of the Dutch studies scholar C.G.N. de Vooy, Potgieter "had never hidden his ab-

38 Busken Huet, *Ongevraagd advies*, 33, 77.

39 C. Busken Huet, 'Een modern predikant. Herinneringen van ds. Leopold', *Nederland xxxii*.3 (1880), 111-138, 249-275, 378-417.

40 *Ibid.*, 270. See also: J.W.J. Versteegen, 'Deel drie van "De Bruce's"', *De Nieuwe Taalgids* LXXV.3 (May 1982), 242-253.

41 This short story was indeed meant to be a critique of modernism, as Busken Huet explained in a letter to A.L.G. Bosboom-Toussaint (1812-1886). See: *Ibid.*, 252.

42 Stating, as Aerts does, that *De Gids* became a platform for modern theology after 1858 is only true for the immediately following decade. Particularly Busken Huet and Pierson propagated modern-theological viewpoints in *De Gids*, but stopped doing so after they had left the church. Other modern theologians would continue to contribute occasionally to *De Gids*, but the editorial policy of the magazine was certainly not one of blind support for modernism as of the 1870s. In turn, not all articles in *De Gids* were applauded in modernist circles. Cf.: Aerts, *De letterheren*, 247-248.

horrence of modern theology.”⁴³ Although this abhorrence manifested itself most explicitly in his private letters to Huet,⁴⁴ modernists at the time were fully aware of Potgieter’s dislike of their movement – at least, judging from the following words that J.H. Maronier wrote in *De Hervorming* in 1882:

Modern theology [...] ultimately disappointed him. In his opinion, it denied too much before it was even able to decide on something. Its spokesmen were guilty of the same intellectualism and dogmatism for which they rightfully blamed orthodoxy. The theological system [of modernism] was confused with religious life [...]. He therefore turned away from the theological quarrels in disgust and openly expressed this aversion in his writings.⁴⁵

Potgieter blamed modernists for their indecisiveness and for the vagueness of their ill-founded convictions. Compared to the “wavering modernist ministers,” an obscurantist priest, who at least knew what he believed in, and who was wholly convinced of the things he preached, even made a favourable impression on him.⁴⁶

Another of Busken Huet’s acquaintances who set his stamp on late nineteenth-century Dutch intellectual life was E. Douwes Dekker (1820–1887), better known under his pen name ‘Multatuli’. Having gained fame with his 1860 publication *Max Havelaar*, a fierce accusation of the economic unscrupulousness of Dutch colonial rule in the East Indies, Multatuli built up an impressive oeuvre in which his distaste for what he perceived as the bourgeois character of Dutch society was a main theme.⁴⁷ As part of this ‘crusade’ against middle-class morals, not only Christianity, but particularly *modernist* Protestantism came under Multatuli’s assault. His most recent biographer, D. van der Meulen, concludes that Multatuli detested modernists more than he did orthodox believers.⁴⁸ A clear and early example thereof is given in

43 De Vooy, *Conrad Busken Huet*, 95. See also: O. Noordenbos, ‘Romantische nabloei en modernisme in Nederland, ca. 1840–ca. 1885’, in: Van Houtte et al. (eds.), *Algemene geschiedenis der Nederlanden* x, 371–392, here 376.

44 E.g.: E.J. Potgieter, *De werken* xxii. *Brieven aan Cd. Busken Huet*, 1869 (Haarlem 1902), 186; *De werken* xxiii. *Brieven aan Cd. Busken Huet*, 1870–1874 (Haarlem 1902), 29, 131.

45 J.H. Maronier, ‘Onze leestafel – Potgieter’, *De Hervorming* 1882–28 (15 July 1882), 112. See also: F.W.F. Nippold, ‘Eene studie over Potgieter’, *De Tijdspiegel* xxix.2 (1882), 51–103, here 86–91.

46 G.B. Brom, *De dominee in onze literatuur* (Nijmegen and Utrecht [1924]), 46–47.

47 Te Velde, ‘How High Did the Dutch Fly?’, 77.

48 D. van der Meulen, *Multatuli. Leven en werk van Eduard Douwes Dekker* (Nijmegen 2002), 461. See also: H. de Veer, *Multatuli (E. Douwes Dekker)* (Haarlem 1888), 140.

some of Multatuli's *Ideën*, a series of seven volumes, comprising 1,282 separate pieces of writing of diverse forms and on diverse subjects. In *Idee* 453 and 454, Multatuli joined the controversy that followed modernist Reformed minister J.C. Zaalberg's (1828-1885) public denial of Jesus's physical resurrection and ascension.⁴⁹ Modern theologians, Multatuli metaphorically wrote, were like pastry cooks who discovered that their merchandise (sermons) contained toxicants (teachings refuted by science and scholarship), but decided not to close their shops (to step down from the pulpit), stuffing their pastries with another poison (modern theology).⁵⁰ The poisonous character of modernism, he alleged, was exemplified by Zaalberg's brochure *De godsdienst van Jezus en de moderne rigting* (*The Religion of Jesus and the Modernist Movement*). Modernist ministers like Zaalberg were half-hearted and insincere in rejecting orthodox views, while clothing their own unorthodox views in orthodox terminology. Accepting that the earth has not come into existence in six days of twenty-four hours, but still affirming that God 'created' reality with 'his hand' was an insult to both science and religion. Moreover, rejecting long-held ideas about God and mankind without questioning religious belief as such was a sign of intellectual feebleness: "[Zaalberg's] question: 'Can I not be a believer without believing this. . . this. . . this. . .?' etc. is theological suicide, and the plain 'no!', which should be anyone's answer to that question, is a short but rather powerful funeral oration at the grave of [his] ministerial honesty."⁵¹

Just like Potgieter, Multatuli preferred the dogmatic believer with a child-like faith, who did not know any better and fully devoted himself to what he regarded as the Truth, over the doubtful and consciously self-deluding modernist. The latter was rightfully sceptical about the biblical narratives, but stopped halfway in his scepticism.⁵² He recognised that contemporary science and scholarship called for Christians to revise their worldview, but only to a certain extent. Simultaneously, he held on to conventional Christian concepts and practices without realising that these concepts and practices only made sense in the orthodox context he rejected. Harmonising science and faith in the 'middle way', which modernists tried to do, was a fruitless endeavour: such

49 This was published as: Zaalberg, *De godsdienst van Jezus en de moderne rigting*. Multatuli might have taken Zaalberg as his object of criticism because of personal resentment: Zaalberg had been the catechist of Multatuli's future wife M.F.C. Hamminck Schepel (1839-1930) and had managed to convince her to (as it turned out, temporarily) end her relationship with Multatuli. See: Van der Meulen, *Multatuli*, 466-467; S.A. Pieterse, *De buik van de lezer. Over spreken en schrijven in Multatuli's "Ideën"* (Nijmegen 2008), 162.

50 Multatuli [E. Douwes Dekker], *Ideën* 11 (Amsterdam [1864-1865] 1880), 146-148.

51 *Ibid.*, 149-180, here 169.

52 Multatuli, *Ideën* 1 (Amsterdam [1862] 1879), 353-354; Pieterse, *De buik van de lezer*, 164.

a 'middle way' was non-existent, Multatuli stressed.⁵³ Furthermore, Multatuli blamed modernists for clinging to what he regarded as a wrongful morality.⁵⁴

Such men of letters as Pierson, Busken Huet, Potgieter, and Multatuli all, in their own way, influenced late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century belletrists.⁵⁵ The generation that immediately succeeded them, known as '*de Tachtigers*' ('the Eighties Movement'), vehemently opposed the ethics and teachings of organised Christianity, both in its orthodox and modernist form, in their initially naturalistic writings.⁵⁶ Modern theology and the modernist movement might not have been such a preoccupation of the *Tachtigers* as it had been for Pierson and Multatuli, the following examples nonetheless show that modernism was, on the whole, not looked at very favourably in the Eighties Movement.

The unofficial 'leader' of the *Tachtigers*, Willem Kloos (1859-1938), spoke very slightly of modernists in a controversy with P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr. When Hugenholtz was still a Dutch Reformed minister in the mid-1870s, he had been Kloos's catechist.⁵⁷ In an 1891 article in *Stemmen uit de Vrije Gemeente*, he had denigrated the *Tachtigers* as "titans," who railed against religion and morality with youthful recklessness.⁵⁸ In response, Kloos accused Hugenholtz of being "foolish" and arrogant. Hugenholtz took it upon himself to philosophise about the inner motives of the Eighties Movement, but he was nothing more than a "vulgariser of stale opinions or whatever looks like opinions." Because he could only appreciate literature if it explicitly glorified the name of God, he did not recognise that the *Tachtigers* "experience the Big Unknown, the One Absolute, to which [he] devotes his life [and which] he makes repugnant with his unbearable gabble, much deeper, deep within, and give verbal expression to [this experience of the Big Unknown] with much greater purity than he and his colleagues all across the country do."⁵⁹ As long as Hugenholtz was unwilling or unable to acknowledge that the *Tachtigers* were his spiritual superiors, he should be silent, Kloos snarled. Later, near the end of his life, Kloos

53 Multatuli, *Ideën* I, 72-73; Pieterse, *De buik van de lezer*, 166.

54 Multatuli, *Ideën* III (Amsterdam [1870-1871] 1876), 362-364; Pieterse, *De buik van de lezer*, 184.

55 De Vooyo, *Allard Pierson naast en tegenover Conrad Busken Huet*, 3, 34.

56 J.J. Meyer, *Het godsdienstig gehalte in onze nieuwe letterkunde* (Baarn 1909), 7-8; D.J. Bos, "Dienaren des Woords". Godgeleerden in de negentiende-eeuwse Nederlandse letterkunde', *De Negentiende Eeuw* XXI.3 (1997), 153-182, here 153-154.

57 W.J.Th. Kloos (H.G.M. Prick ed.), *Zelfportret* (Amsterdam 1986), 15.

58 P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., 'De mystiek der jongere radicalen', *Stemmen uit de Vrije Gemeente* XIV (1891), 103-124.

59 W.J.Th. Kloos, 'Over dominee Hugenholtz en Frederik van Eeden', *De Nieuwe Gids* VI (1891), 301-310, here 303-304.

looked back upon the Sunday services and confirmation classes led by Hugenholtz that he had attended in his youth. He had had, he stated, high expectations of these services and classes at first, particularly because Hugenholtz was an esteemed and popular minister in those days. Soon, however, he had become deeply disappointed: Hugenholtz only preached “comforting namby-pambyisms, interspersed with Scriptural passages” in such a “far-fetched or vague and indefinite [way] that I often failed to grasp the drift of his chatter.” What most failed to satisfy Kloos was that this modernist minister had been unable to give him something to hold on to in his quest for God.⁶⁰

Similarly, Frank van der Goes, writing under the pen name ‘Ph. Hack van Outheusden’, ferociously mocked modernist ministers in an 1888 article in *De Nieuwe Gids* (*The New Guide*), the main platform of the Eighties Movement. He blamed them for preaching a vapid gospel of virtue, sweetness, tranquility, and decency, and for their bourgeois mannerisms: they could be found more often in gentlemen’s clubs than in churches. In conclusion, Van der Goes scornfully averred that “for years, they have not given any other signs of life than an insignificant, semi-amusing, semi-sentimentalist literature, a platitudinous philosophy, a practice of makeshift measures and petty humanism, inartistic and grossly bourgeois aesthetics.”⁶¹ Another *Tachtiger*, Lodewijk van Deyssel (1864-1952), agreed with Van der Goes when he stated that “there is much more poetry and art in historical Christianity than there is in modern theology.” He even reechoed Potgieter and the elderly Pierson by “highly” preferring an orthodox theologian such as Abraham Kuyper to a modernist minister such as Hugenholtz.⁶²

In the 1890s, when the Eighties Movement began to disintegrate, naturalism lost its prominence in Dutch literature. Instead of attempting to write about life as ‘raw’ a way as possible, authors came to focus attention on the human psyche, ‘hidden’ emotions, and spirituality. This trend is exemplified by the works of Louis Couperus (1863-1923), an editor of *De Gids* in 1894 and 1895, and Frederik van Eeden (1860-1932), an editor of *De Nieuwe Gids* from 1885 until 1893 and as such involved with the Eighties Movement. However, the increasing literary interest in supersensory experiences and feelings did not lead to more appreciation for liberal Protestantism among intellectuals.

60 Kloos, *Zelfportret*, 99-100.

61 Ph. Hack van Outheusden [F. van der Goes], ‘Jong-Amsterdam’, *De Nieuwe Gids* xxx (1888), 460-474, here 466-467. Another member of the Eighties Movement, Herman Gorter, aligned himself with Van der Goes as a leading socialist intellectual.

62 L. van Deyssel, *Verzamelde opstellen* II (Amsterdam [1897] 1901), 171. Lodewijk van Deyssel was the alias of K.J.L. Alberdingk Thijm, who had had a Catholic upbringing.

Though not explicitly condemning liberal Protestantism in their writings as such – in the early 1900s, Van Eeden even moved in a circle of utopists, Spiritists and anarchists, of which also some modernists were part –, authors such as Couperus and Van Eeden developed an interest in occultism and mysticism, and consequently left their nominally Protestant backgrounds further and further behind.⁶³

One of his earliest biographers, the Jesuit H.J. Padberg (1881-1926), claimed in 1925 that Van Eeden developed a distaste for Protestantism and “all positive religion” (religion constrained by theology) at an early age.⁶⁴ In so doing, Padberg more or less reiterated what Van Eeden had himself declared in a 1923 lecture, in which he legitimised his recent and controversial conversion to Roman Catholicism.⁶⁵ Apparently, as this lecture seems to suggest, Van Eeden had frequented confirmation classes led by a *liberal-minded* minister in his youth, for he characterised his catechist as an “utter atheist and denier of God’s existence” – a characterisation which would make no sense if applied to a dogmatic, orthodox minister, but which was oftentimes used to caricature modernist ministers.⁶⁶ These confirmation classes had not increased his sympathy for Christianity in any way; Van Eeden stated that he already was a “full-blooded freethinker” at the age of fifteen and had, accordingly, clearly distanced himself from ecclesial Christianity during his involvement with the Eighties Movement, most notably in his 1887 *Predikanten-lied* (*Song of the Pastors*) and his 1894 drama *De broeders* (*The Brothers*).⁶⁷

In retrospect, Couperus claimed to have been a devout child, even though his parents did not go to church. They did send him to confirmation classes in the Walloon Reformed congregation of The Hague, but solely because they felt that French-language religious instruction was an indispensable element of an upper-class upbringing.⁶⁸ As the literary critic Van Tricht suggests, it was

63 D. Jansen, ‘Spiritisme en theosofie in het werk van Louis Couperus, Marcellus Emants en Frederik van Eeden’, in: G.Th. Jensma and Y.B. Kuiper (eds.), *De god van Nederland is de beste. Elf opstellen over religie in de moderne Nederlandse literatuur* (Kampen 1997), 31-47.

64 H.J. Padberg, *Frederik van Eeden* (Roermond 1925), 11, 200.

65 Published in: F. van Eeden, *Langs den weg. Verspreide opstellen* (Roermond 1925), 153-184.

66 *Ibid.*, 162. This same minister figures in: F. van Eeden, *Brieven. Fragmenten eener briefwisseling uit de jaren 1889-1899* (Amsterdam and Leipzig 1907), 33. Here, Van Eeden describes him as someone who was constantly mocked for his clever sermons. Van Eeden did not agree with him and would leave Protestantism behind altogether, but “adored” him as a person nonetheless.

67 Quoted in: G. Kalf, Jr., *Frederik van Eeden. Psychologie van den Tachtiger* (Groningen 1927), 23.

68 F.L. Bastet, *Louis Couperus. Een biografie* (Amsterdam 2005), 87.

precisely due to the religious indifference of his parents that Couperus, who strongly disliked his rigidly orthodox catechist,⁶⁹ did not feel as much resentment against Christianity and never attacked Christian preachers in such a harsh way as, for example, Multatuli or Kloos.⁷⁰ Nonetheless, Couperus, whose books have been called gnostic-theological in character, did emphasise his not being a Christian and firmly rejected both orthodox and modernist conceptions of God.⁷¹

In spite of all the developments in Dutch liberal Protestantism after the First World War, the sympathy for the modernist movement in Dutch belletrist circles did not increase. Menno ter Braak (1902-1940), who had been raised in a liberal Protestant family and rose to prominence as one of the most influential intellectuals in the Netherlands in the 1930s, expressed his aversion of modernism on many occasions. In the mid-1920s, for example, he published several articles in the Amsterdam student newspaper *Propria Cures* that ruthlessly denounced the free-floating character and unclear idealism of the *Vrijzinnig-Christelijke Studentenbond* (Liberal Christian League of Students or VCSB), of which he had briefly been a member. One literary critic would later characterise this controversy as the beginning of Ter Braak's departure from "the kind of Christianity that gives collective ethical precepts in its theology."⁷² In 1927, Ter Braak even stated that he "hated" liberal Protestantism.⁷³ Four years later, in *Afscheid van domineesland* (*Farewell to Clergymen's Country*), he criticised the "weak, vague and... shapeless form that liberal Protestantism preaches." In order not to give offence to his self-satisfied flock, Ter Braak argued, a minister could never plainly speak the truth, but had to preach hollow phrases. Illustrating his argument by referring to two well-known modernists, Ter Braak averred that "[a] minister can be edifying, such as Roessingh, or he can be terribly popular, such as Bakels, but he is never clear." He denounced modernists for their half-heartedness, moralism, and inability or unwillingness to change;

69 H.A.C. van Booven, *Leven en werken van Louis Couperus* (Velsen 1933), 72.

70 H.W. van Tricht, *Louis Couperus. Een verkenning* (The Hague 1965), 19.

71 K.J. Popma, *Beschouwingen over het werk van Louis Couperus (1863-1923)* (Amsterdam 1968), 11-12, 127-130, 154, 160, 207-208. In his perhaps most famous novel, *Van oude mensen, de dingen, die voorbij gaan...*, Couperus satirises Roman Catholicism and Protestantism in the characters of the sisters Stefanie and Thérèse. See: P. Hoffman, 'Signalementen – Nieuw licht op "Oude mensen"', *Literatuur* xvi (1999), 196-197.

72 M. ter Braak (C.G.H.A.A.M. Peeters ed.), *De Propria Curesartikelen, 1923-1925* (The Hague 1978), 18.

73 Quoted in: B. Materman, *Menno ter Braak en het dramaturgisch perspectief* (Amsterdam 1986), 26.

their worldview had become untenable, but “the army of liberal ministers that covers this country” continued to

preach the Gospel of amorphousness (love thy neighbour, how matters less) in the form of a humanistic, ethical ‘Christianity’ with a vague Jesus of Nazareth and the Leiden Translation of the Bible.⁷⁴ [...] They grope around for everything old and new that can be dealt with eclectically. . . and preach their endless Sunday sermons before a shrinking Sunday audience. On all sides, their worldview is crumbling away, but they still choose the topics of their sermons from the Old and New Testament every week. [...] [They] maintain that their weekly sermon on love contains the eternal law of love, even when the point will be reached that only one very old *stovenzetster* [a woman who takes care of footstoves in a church building, *тк*] listens to their preaching – [...] they will continue to lean on this one exhausted, preached-to-death, utterly exploited and squeezed-out form in which they desperately try to mould all their cultural aspirations: ‘modern Christianity’.⁷⁵

In this quote, Ter Braak implied that ‘modern Christianity’ was like an empty box: it was so vague that it was meaningless. Furthermore, he jestingly indicated that modernists reduced religion to the moralistic imperative to live ‘righteous’ lives, and stressed the outmodedness of liberal Protestantism by limiting its audience to a ‘*stovenzetster*’, whose function had basically become superfluous with the introduction of electrical church heating. A significant sign of Ter Braak’s cultural influence is that after his publication, the term ‘*domineesland*’ (‘clergymen’s country’) came to signify what many intellectuals perceived as the petty bourgeois, parochial character of the Dutch and their culture.⁷⁶ Ter Braak’s close friend and fellow intellectual E. du Perron (1899–1940) modelled a fictional character after him in *Land van herkomst* (*Country of Origin*), published in 1935 – a character that reflects upon his

74 A translation of the Old and New Testament written from a historical-critical perspective between 1885 and 1912, which was intended to replace the sixteenth-century Dutch Authorised Version of the Bible among modernists. Due to strong objections against its ‘old-school’ modernist character, its circulation was low, and primarily limited to NPB circles. See: T.E.M. Krijger, ‘De Bijbel als vrijzinnig strijdwapen en sieraad. De ontstaans- en receptiegeschiedenis van de Leidsche Vertaling (1884–1912)’, *Trajecta. Religie, cultuur en samenleving in de Nederlanden* XXVII.2 (2018), 325–352.

75 M. ter Braak, *Afscheid van domineesland* (Brussel 1931), 201, 13, 199–201.

76 E.A. Postma, *Dilettant, pelgrim, nar. De positie van C.W. Mönnich in cultuur en theologie* (Delft 2008), 49.

modernist upbringing with resentment and refers to edifying modernist literature as “baloney” written by “some pipsqueak, Reverend Mackenzie or something.”⁷⁷

As this overview demonstrates, leading Dutch intellectuals did not look very favourably on modern theology and the movement that carried its banner in church and society.⁷⁸ They denounced and oftentimes ridiculed the half-heartedness of modernism, the vagueness of modernists’ views, the pretensions with which the modernist movement presented itself, modernists’ perceived hypocrisy, and modernist ethics. Some of them, such as Pierson and Busken Huet, assumed the role of authoritative ‘expert witnesses’, as they had been modernist ministers themselves and had thus literally *experienced* what was ‘wrong’ with modernism. The same could be said of Kloos and Ter Braak, who had been raised as modernists. For all of these men, modernism had at a certain moment become no longer satisfactory. This is not to say that orthodoxy did not also come in for attack by them, although the elderly Pierson, Potgieter, Multatuli, and Van Deyssel preferred the sincerity and naiveté with which many orthodox professed their faith to the irresoluteness with which modernists tried to harmonise science, culture, and religion. Of course, the overview above cannot do justice to the complexity and diversity of these authors’ works, nor can it take into full account that their oeuvre was not ‘static’. The young Van Eeden, for example, wrote different books than did the elderly Van Eeden. The point here is that all of these men of letters, and the same goes for other key players in Dutch intellectual life, were consistent in their rejection of modernism, or at least never explicitly sympathised, let alone sided, with the modernist movement.⁷⁹ True, there were some intellectuals

77 E. du Perron, *Het land van herkomst* (Amsterdam 1935), 322. See also: L.H.M. Hanssen, *Want alle verlies is winst. Menno ter Braak, 1902-1940* (Amsterdam 2000), 199-204. ‘Mackenzie’ probably refers to the Remonstrant minister Willem Mackenzie. In the second edition of *Het land van herkomst*, the name of Mackenzie was replaced by “Reverend What’s-his-name.”

78 One notable exception in literary circles was the poet Jacques Perk (1859-1881). His father, M.A. Perk (1834-1916), was a minister in a Walloon Reformed congregation and went along with the modernist movement. Jacques Perk stated in one of his poems to ‘definitely belong to the modernist movement’ himself as well, although he never actively participated in it. The Eighties Movement was inspired by Perk, but certainly did not share his liberal Protestant persuasion. See: J.F.H. Perk (C. Vosmaer and W.J.Th. Kloos eds.), *Gedichten van Jacques Perk* (Amsterdam [1882] 1889), 16; G. Stuiveling, ‘Perk, Jacques (Fabrice Herman)’, in: A.G.H. Bachrach et al. (eds.), *Moderne Encyclopedie van de Wereldliteratuur* VII (Haarlem and Antwerp [1963] 1983), 193-194; R. Breugelmans, *Jacques Perk* (New York 1974), 17.

79 E.g.: [H.Y. Groenewegen in:] ‘Berichten, enz. – Buitenland’, *De Hervorming* 1907-44 (2 November 1907), 349-350, here 350.

who did applaud the modernist movement and willingly accepted an invitation to speak at the annual *Protestantendag*, among them the meteorologist C.H.D. Buys Ballot (1817-1890) in 1875 and the liberal politician J.H. Geertsema (1816-1908) in 1893, but their number was very small, already even in the 1870s and 1880s. Modernists lamented this, but, paradoxically, only broadened the gap between themselves and intellectuals.

3 Modernist Responses to Intellectuals

If one wants to know which topics and thoughts preoccupied intellectuals in a given period of time, one should read the prose and poetry that was published in that period.⁸⁰ Just like the former section, this section will therefore take the circle of leading belletrists as a representative reflection of Dutch intellectual life at large. In modernist literary reviews, the discourse of the spiritual aristocracy of tutors can clearly be heard.⁸¹ It goes without saying that modernists paid attention in their reviews to the plot of a book, the way in which protagonists are portrayed in a novel, and an author's style of writing and use of metaphors. Belletrists such as Multatuli and Couperus were consequently praised by modernist reviewers for their literary genius. The *ultimate* criterion on which modernist book reviewers based their critique, however, was not aesthetics, but ethics. Literature only received a positive final judgement if it was the product of an elevated mind, if it contributed to intellectual development, and if it promoted (liberal) religiousness and morality. Naturalism, materialism and the notion of *l'art pour l'art* (art for its own sake), particularly dominant in the Eighties Movement, therefore met with no appreciation in modernist circles.⁸² Recognising that publicists could highly influence public opinion, modernists felt that they should be fully aware of the great social responsibility that they bore.

80 As Van der Ent writes: "...after all, literary works reflect contemporary thinking." Quoted from: H. van der Ent, *Literatuur en christelijk perspectief* (The Hague 1982), 102.

81 One example of how *orthodox* Protestants reviewed contemporary literature is given in: B. Wielenga, *Moderne letterkunde en christelijke opvoeding* (Amsterdam 1922). Modernist and orthodox Protestants both favoured religious motifs in literature, but for the latter, these motifs had to be explicitly Trinitarian.

82 E.g.: E.J.W. Koch, 'Een slecht gekozen geneesmiddel', *De Hervorming* 1884-36 (6 September 1884), 143-144; Mary, 'Doodzwijgen of protesteeren?', *Ibid.* 1888-41 (13 October 1888), 161-162; B.B., 'Onze leestafel – "Stemmen uit de Vrije Gemeente"', *Ibid.* 1891-20 (16 May 1891), 80; H. de Lang, 'Hoop', *Ibid.* 1891-29 (18 July 1891), 116; [H.W.Ph.E. van den Bergh van Eysinga in:] 'Nederlandsche Protestantenvbond – Afd. St. Anna-Parochie', *Ibid.* 1895-52 (28 December 1925), 207.

For modernist reviewers, the value of a novel or poem largely depended on the intentions with which the author had written it.⁸³ Moreover, these reviewers felt that protagonists in literary writings should be 'spiritual aristocrats' who could serve as an example to others by having a clear mind, a religious or at least idealistic attitude to life, and high moral principles. In this way, spiritually less developed people would be given a 'helping hand' to (further) develop themselves cognitively, religiously, and ethically. Literature that might incite 'indecent' or 'improper' thoughts and behaviours, by focusing attention on the weakness of the flesh or by undermining the close connection between religious and ethical life, was seen as a threat to spiritual public welfare and hence as obstructing the free development of spiritual life. After all, as the predominant modernist line of reasoning had it, spiritual life could only develop freely if individuals were not just freed from the chains of superstition and supernaturalist dogmatism, but also if 'lower impulses', bad morals, and alcohol no longer had control over them. For that reason, modernists not only made a stand against orthodox obscurantism and intolerance, but at the same time also polemicised against prostitution, pauperism, alcoholism, as well as literature that neutrally depicted or even romanticised such ethically objectionable practices.⁸⁴ Several examples will serve to illustrate this.

Modernists reacted not only resentfully to Pierson's and Busken Huet's resignation, but also denigrated these former modernists' literary work. The first novel Pierson wrote after he had permanently stepped down from the pulpit was *Adriaan de Mérival*, published in 1866. The protagonist of this novel, an assistant minister in a fictional village congregation, falls in love with a girl who, due to a complicated history full of infidelity, misunderstandings and intrigues, is wrongly believed to be his sister. When it turns out that Adriaan and this girl are not related at all, their affection for each other can still not fully blossom: Adriaan is Dutch Reformed, while his love interest, Caroline Martin, is Roman Catholic and continues to be so. An important supporting role in the novel is that of Doctor Beelen, the village physician. The erudite and free-thinking Beelen dislikes Christianity from the bottom of his heart. According to him, Christian ethics foster weakness and selfishness. Moreover, he is convinced that Christianity suppresses man's true nature. Genuine humanity can

83 J.H. Maronier expressed what was generally felt in modernist circles: a novel could only enhance spiritual life if it was the product of a "clean imagination" and if it "evoked ideals of a pure ethical quality." Quoted from: [J.H. Maronier in:] 'Vergadering van moderne theologen op 30 April en 1 Mei', *De Hervorming* 1878-21 (25 May 1878), 1-2, here 2.

84 See also: T.E.M. Krijger, 'Vrijzinnigen als fatsoensrakkers. Multatuli en Couperus aan de maatstaf van zedelijkheid getoetst (±1880-±1920)', *Ruimte / Mens & Tijd* 2015-03 (2015), 3-5.

hence not find expression in religion, but only in art, for “all human sensations, convictions, principles, actions are valued by an artist not by the criterion of truth or morality, but exclusively by a standard that is provided to him by human nature itself: his own aesthetic sense.”⁸⁵

Modernists, on the other hand, based their appreciation of art precisely on what they regarded as truth and true morality. The anonymous reviewer in the modernist literary magazine *Los en Vast* accordingly made mincemeat of *Adriaan de Mérial*. He blamed Pierson for letting Caroline go to ethical-religious ruin – Pierson’s novel would have been better if Adriaan had helped Caroline to recognise the superiority of liberal Protestantism over Roman Catholicism.⁸⁶ Moreover, Pierson wrote about freethinker Beelen with so much sympathy that “he prepares the world for a new deluge [the downfall of Christian civilisation, TK], if his novel, with its monstrous theories and deeply poisoned purpose, ever becomes popular.”⁸⁷ The reviewer therefore concludes that *Adriaan de Mérial* was “a thoroughly unethical novel.” The characters “do not seem to care about religion in any way” and let their “bestial passions” rule them. Even if Pierson had not meant to encourage people to forswear their religion and moral compass, he should have known what the consequences of openly writing about irreligious and immoral thoughts and deeds would be. But the reviewer found it hard to avoid the impression that Pierson had intentionally written the novel to popularise the same ‘reprehensible’ ideas put forward in *De moderne richting en de kristelijke kerk*.⁸⁸ In sum, Pierson had neglected his responsibility as a shaper of public opinion by destroying instead of enhancing spiritual life. This stinging critique on Pierson’s (and Busken Huet’s) writings was no exception.⁸⁹ After an umpteenth negative review of one of Pierson’s writings, one letter writer in *De Hervorming* of 15 September 1888 even questioned whether modernist reviewers were not too harsh in their cri-

85 A. Pierson, *Adriaan de Mérial. Een leerjaar* III (Arnhem 1866), 34.

86 ‘Adriaan de Mérial. Een leerjaar’, *Los en Vast* II (1867), 10–68, here 25–26. The reviewer probably was G. van Gorkom.

87 *Ibid.*, 48–49.

88 *Ibid.*, 56–68. This reviewer, and many other reviewers with him, was of the belief that Pierson had modelled Beelen after himself. In a letter to Kuenen, however, Pierson denied this. See: Pierson (Trapman ed.), *Tussen religieus gevoel en kritisch denken*, 15, note 32. In fact, Beelen was modelled after the late J.B. Molewater (1813–1864), the director of a hospital in Rotterdam who had been a close friend of Pierson. See: Buitenwerf-van der Molen, *God van vooruitgang*, 55, note 51.

89 For example, Busken Huet’s 1868 novel *Lidewyde*, infamous for its rather explicit depiction of carnal desires and adultery, was just as harshly criticised in *Los en Vast* as *Adriaan de Mérial*. Just like Pierson, Huet was blamed for the “feebleness of his ethical convictions,” and for not clearly condemning ‘evil’ in his novel. See: G. van Gorkom, ‘Lidewyde’, *Los en Vast* III (1868), 225–295, here 282.

tique: “is everyone allowed to say anything as long as it is about Dr Pierson?” This letter writer was rather embarrassed to see that Pierson was constantly “showered with insults” in modernist circles.⁹⁰

Looking back upon past and present modernist opinions about Multatuli, one article writer in *De Hervorming* of 11 January 1908 stated that modernists have been, and still were, ‘struggling’ with him.⁹¹ They acknowledged his stylistic qualities, but generally condemned the content and influence of his writings. As could be read in *De Hervorming* in early 1882, Multatuli was “no champion of the freedom of the mind,” in spite of what his devotees maintained, for he “triflingly” portrayed *all* religious idealism as backward in his rejection of dogmatism and clericalism.⁹² Multatuli took delight in making modernist ministers the butt of his “here and there cruel mockery” without making the effort to actually study modernism himself.⁹³ Moreover, he accepted nature as man’s only moral compass, but failed to recognise that true morality called rather for the suppression of certain natural urges.⁹⁴ His writings were said to propagate the naturalist idea that all that is natural is intrinsically good, as well as the materialist idea that all that is real is fundamentally material instead of spiritual, views with devastating consequences for Dutch people’s spiritual life.⁹⁵ A letter writer in *De Blijde Wereld* of 16 August 1907 poetically characterised Multatuli as “an iconoclast, not a reformer”: he ridiculed existing thoughts about a higher being or force on which nature depended, and scoffed at moral norms without having any ideals of his own.⁹⁶ Even though modernists gradually came to reconsider such claims in the 1910s and 1920s,⁹⁷ the

90 W.J. van Douwen, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *De Hervorming* 1888-37 (15 September 1888), 148. Van Douwen remarked that whereas modernists generally tore Pierson’s writings to shreds, others generally praised his literary work.

91 V.R.D., ‘Ingezonden stukken – Is Multatuli in zijn latere dagen tot het geloof in God gekomen?’, *Ibid.* 1908-02 (11 January 1908), 14.

92 [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘Binnenland – Een nationaal huldeblijk aan E. Douwes Dekker’, *Ibid.* 1882-13 (1 April 1882), 51.

93 J.W. van der Linden, ‘Over Multatuli’, *Ibid.* 1887-10 (5 March 1887), 38.

94 *Ibid.*; J.N. Wiersma, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Multatuli’, *Ibid.* 1887-12 (19 March 1887), 47-48.

95 L. Knappert, ‘Onze leestafel – “Letterkundige opstellen”’, *Ibid.* 1894-37 (15 September 1894), 147-148.

96 ‘Van verre en nabij’, *De Blijde Wereld* v.43 (16 August 1907), 2-3, here 3. See also: [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Ter school bij Multatuli’, *De Hervorming* 1893-03 (21 January 1893), 11; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Berichten, enz. – Multatuli en het Godsgeloof’, *Ibid.* 1908-03 (18 January 1908), 19-20; H. Bakels, ‘Ingezonden stukken – De Multatuli-quaestie’, *Ibid.* 1908-03 (18 January 1908), 22.

97 [G. de Leeuw in:] ‘Berichten, enz. – Een lezing over Multatuli’, *Ibid.* 1912-07 (17 February 1912), 51-52; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, ‘Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Multatuli vóór vijftig jaar’, *Ibid.* 1920-08 (28 February 1920), 29-30.

organs of modernist opinion continued to depict Multatuli as the apostle of religious scepticism, insubordination and immorality, whose writings incited people to licentiousness.

Multatuli did not take all this criticism lying down. After the Rotterdam-based magazine *De Protestant* had complained in 1884 that “respectable gentlemen and distinguished ladies, young men and even girls [. . .] have accepted all that is mean and have become accustomed to all that is dirty by reading Multatuli,” he took up his pen.⁹⁸ In a letter sent to several newspapers, Multatuli quoted these lines from *De Protestant* and cynically added that they deserved to be read by as many people as possible, as they were a pre-eminent testimony to the ‘tolerance’ and ‘liberality’ on which modernists prided themselves.⁹⁹ Domela Nieuwenhuis wrote a letter to Multatuli in which he expressed approval of this “poignant” and “justified” response to *De Protestant*, and fully identified himself with Multatuli as a martyr of the God-less Truth pursued by modernist inquisitors: “those modernists are the perfect leaders of the blind! In the same week, I had to read in *De Hervorming*, the magazine of the half-baked *Protestantenbond*, that, according to ‘us’, modernist spokesmen, I have lost all sense of morality. Hence, brother, give me your hand, we have sunk low in the eyes of these gentlemen and there is only one way left to receive salvation, that is, throwing ourselves into their hands, while begging for mercy, [and] muddling along and swindling with them.”¹⁰⁰ Multatuli and Domela both moved in the circle of atheist freethinkers grouped around *De Dageraad*. Whereas Domela only supported Multatuli in private correspondence, another *Dageraad* freethinker, J. Hobbel (1857-1931), publicly stood up for him in his controversy with *De Protestant*. Hobbel claimed not to understand modernists’ approach to literature and literary criticism: they blamed Multatuli for writing literature that might stimulate people’s imagination and senses, but they did not erase passages from the Bible that were ethically far more appalling than Multatuli’s writings.¹⁰¹ However, as *De Protestant* indicated, the

98 ‘Mededeelingen en berichten – Meedoen (Seraphine)’, *De Protestant* 11.38 (20 September 1884), 3-4. See also: Multatuli (H. van den Bergh and B.P.M. Dongelmans eds.), *Volledige werken* XIII. *Brieven en documenten uit de jaren 1884-1886* (Amsterdam 1993), 206-207.

99 *Ibid.*, 243-244, 252-253, 260-261.

100 Multatuli (Van den Bergh and Dongelmans eds.), *Volledige werken* XXIII, 245-247, here 246. Domela referred to: [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘Een eisch van het materialistisch socialisme afgewezen’, *De Hervorming* 1884-47 (22 November 1884), 187.

101 J. Hobbel, ‘Multatuli’s verderfelijke invloed’, *De Dageraad* VI (1884-1885), 377-382. Multatuli was not very pleased with Hobbel’s defence, as Hobbel did not say that his work was not immoral at all, but only that his work was *less* immoral compared to the Bible. See: N.M.H. Maas, ‘Als een priester en zijn preekstoel. Multatuli en het tijdschrift “De Dageraad”’, in: Derkx et al. (ed.), *Voor menselijkheid of tegen godsdienst?*, 69-83, here 82.

books of the Bible bore no comparison with those of Multatuli: inciting immorality had not been the intention of the authors of the Bible, but it could at least be questioned whether this was also not Multatuli's intention.¹⁰²

At the meeting of modern theologians of 1891, Van Loenen Martinet delivered a lecture about 'fatalism in our most recent literature,' which was actually, in spite of its broad title, mostly devoted to Louis Couperus. Reviewing Couperus's first and second novels, *Eline Vere* and *Noodlot* (*Fate*), Van Loenen Martinet noted with regret that novelists such as Couperus had a penchant for portraying characters who just let life 'happen' to them, lacking as they did any ideals and principles worth fighting for. Such a fatalistic attitude to life "is a pathogen that affects [the body] and corrodes the sense of responsibility, sense of duty, self-control – in a word: the moral personality."¹⁰³ Moreover, in writings such as those of Couperus, religion did not seem to be a determining factor in what people thought and did. Van Loenen Martinet did not say that novelists should abstain from writing about the dark sides of life altogether, although he was certainly not very pleased with passages describing these dark sides, but he did exhort them to present their readership with a higher, idealistic philosophy of life. Belletrists like Couperus refrained from doing this. The modernist movement, Van Loenen Martinet concluded, therefore had the lofty duty "of creating a moral and spiritual environment in which those gifted with literary talents will [be able to] prophesy as poets, playwrights and novelists about a different spirit [different from the spirit with which writings such as those of Couperus were suffused, *тк*] and testify to a purer and higher vital urge."¹⁰⁴

Van Deyssel threw himself into the breach for Couperus. Initially, he observed with amusement that people felt the need to write "philosophical-ethical treatises" about books like *Eline Vere* and *Noodlot*. On further consideration, however, he stopped his jeering laugh and came to realise that men such as Van Loenen Martinet were "false," for their treatises "are based on a view of literature that is archaic, different from, and almost opposed to, the view of literature that the creator of those superb pieces of writing [Couperus, *тк*] consciously or unconsciously holds." Van Loenen Martinet, Van Deyssel

102 'Antwoord aan den heer J. Hobbel', *De Protestant* 11.49 (6 December 1884), 2-3; 'Iets over den invloed van Multatuli', *Ibid.* 11.50 (13 December 1884), 1-2. See also: 'Correspondentie', *Ibid.* 11.40 (4 October 1884), 4; 11.42 (18 October 1884), 4; 'Pluksel – Vrijzinnige onzin', *De Nederlandsche Spectator* 1884-50 (13 December 1884), 407; 'Pluksel – "De Protestant" ca. Multatuli', *Ibid.* 1884-52 (27 December 1884), 423; Multatuli (Van den Bergh and Dongel-mans eds.), *Volledige werken* XIII, 247-250, 254-260.

103 J. van Loenen Martinet, *Het fatalisme in onze jongste letterkunde* (Haarlem 1891), 14.

104 *Ibid.*, 28-29.

avers, could only appreciate novels if they had an obvious moralistic drift. As a result, he wrongfully read Couperus's novels as a recommendation of a fatalistic attitude to life and was unable to fathom the psychological and emotional depth of these novels.¹⁰⁵

Van Deyssel rightly noted that modernist reviewers had a view of literature in which ethics were ultimately more important than aesthetics. The latter continued to base their evaluation of Couperus's novels on the standard of edification. They recognised that Couperus, unlike Multatuli, was not a materialist and had a sense of spirituality, but also insisted that this spiritual sense should not find expression in a conceptual universe and vocabulary referring to a supernatural reality, the existence of which modernists denied. Yet that was exactly what Couperus did in, for example, his 1892 collection of short stories *Eene illuzie* (*An Illusion*). The work's description of hidden, magical powers that were supposed to influence nature, L. Knappert argued, could arouse all kinds of "superstitious thoughts" and "morbid fantasies" in readers, and was therefore as unwholesome as literary pornography.¹⁰⁶ The same was true of the evocative and revealing descriptions of debauchery in some of Couperus's novels.¹⁰⁷ One of these novels was *Hooge troeven* (*High Trumps*), published in 1896, which received a negative review in *De Hervorming* as well as in the politically liberal-conservative, modernist-oriented *De Tijdspiegel* (*The Mirror of the Age*) because of its setting in "physically and ethically perverted court circles."¹⁰⁸ In both magazines, reviewer Knappert also ripped Couperus's *Langs lijnen van geleidelijkheid* (*Along the Lines of Gradualness*) to shreds. Due to the libertine style of living of its protagonists, he referred to this 1900 novel in *De Hervorming* as "this piece of filth,"¹⁰⁹ and blamed Couperus in *De Tijdspiegel* for not being the 'spiritual aristocrat' he ought to be: *Langs lijnen van geleidelijkheid* contains "the most cynical preaching of sexual urges as [man's deepest motive] ever written in our literary history. . . It is harmful that Couperus, owing to his fame and influence, makes so many people acquainted with this message – his artistic sense and talent do not stack up against this."¹¹⁰ The 1905 novel *De berg van licht* (*The Mountain of*

105 L. van Deyssel, *Prozastukken* (Amsterdam 1895), 183–190.

106 L. Knappert, 'Betooverde wereld', *De Hervorming* 1892–30 (23 July 1892), 117–118, here 117.

107 W., 'Leestafel – Kleinzieligheid', *Ibid.* 1902–19 (10 May 1902), 148–149.

108 'Onze leestafel – "Hooge troeven"', *Ibid.* 1896–24 (13 June 1896), 95. See also: L. Knappert, 'Daling', *De Tijdspiegel* LIII.3 (1896), 283–289.

109 [L. Knappert], 'Berichten, enz. – Nog eene examen-vraag', *De Hervorming* 1900–34 (25 August 1900), 261.

110 L. Knappert, 'Twee tegenvoeters', *De Tijdspiegel* LVII.3 (1900), 424–430, here 429–430.

Light), to take a last example, was characterised in *De Hervorming* as “a poisonous book [. . .], in which disgraceful, beastly excesses of sexual-sensual life are described in extreme detail [and] with outrageously brutal graphicness.”¹¹¹ All in all, modernist reviewers acknowledged that Couperus was a master at bringing out the richness of the Dutch language, but not at edifying the Dutch nation: precisely because of his beautiful style of writing, readers could get the impression that it is the decadence depicted in his novels that makes life worth living.¹¹²

Of course, as the previous section has shown, the literary world was no static entity with fixed ideals and fixed interests: as in society and culture in general, materialism had had its day and spiritual concerns became more prominent in the circle of belletrists at the beginning of the twentieth century. Similarly, as the previous chapters have pointed out, the modernist movement was not immutable either: malcontentism, right-wing modernism, and the ‘ecclesial turn’ decisively influenced its evolution. Yet just as modernism continued to be looked down upon in intellectual circles, so too did modernist literary criticism continued to be based on the standard of edification. Knappert, for example, lamented in 1894 that contemporary literature lacked the qualities of genuinely ‘good’ literature: it glamorised a life without purpose and without a sense of duty, depressed instead of encouraged people, and was suffused with a spirit of world-weariness and boredom – all of which, Knappert felt, was closely connected to belletrists’ agnostic or atheist attitude to life.¹¹³ Three years later, A. Carlier, writing under the pen name ‘Censor’, shows himself to be of the same mind: most recently published novels gave the impression that life was meaningless, and bred pessimism, melancholia, and weariness with life. Although novelists should not sermonise, they should be fully aware of the strong influence their writings exerted on their readers, “whose spiritual life is usually imperfectly developed, and [who usually] lack a clear attitude to life, a pure aesthetic sense and moral strength.” For that reason,

111 [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Berichten, enz. – Een verfoeilijk boek’, *De Hervorming* 1906-08 (24 February 1906), 61.

112 ‘Berichten, enz. – Geestes-aristocratie’, *Ibid.* 1901-04 (26 January 1901), 28; A.G.-d.W., ‘Leestafel’, *Ibid.* 1901-29 (20 July 1901), 228; P.H. Veen, ‘Leestafel – “Van oude mensen”’, *Ibid.* 1906-31 (4 August 1906), 243-244; L. Knappert, ‘Louis Couperus’, *De Tijdspiegel* LIII.3 (1896), 157-185, here 174. See also: M. Galle, *Couperus in de kritiek* (Amsterdam 1963), 15-18; T.E.M. Krijger, ‘Een “aristocraat van den geest”? Een receptiegeschiedenis van de werken van Louis Couperus in vrijzinnig-protestantse kring (±1890-1923)’, *Arabesken. Tijdschrift van het Louis Couperus Genootschap* XXVI.51 (2018), 4-15.

113 L. Knappert, ‘Vermoeide mensen en vermoeide schrijvers’, *De Hervorming* 1894-03 (20 January 1894), 9.

novels should not focus on immoral thoughts and situations, and should have protagonists who inspire people to cherish high moral ideals. "Every form of art," Carlier therefore concluded, "that disregards what ought to prevail in human life, namely the ethically good, is dangerous and condemnable."¹¹⁴ J.J. Meyer, one of the experts on modern art in modernist circles, expressed himself in similar terms in 1907, stating that aesthetics and ethics could not be separated: contemporary literature was not primarily objectionable because it openly depicted immorality, but rather because it disseminated a 'low' spirit.¹¹⁵

Meyer repeated this point in a 1909 booklet, as part of the NPB-series *Redelijke godsdienst*, on 'the religious content of our youngest literature'.¹¹⁶ Moreover, while recognising manifestations of the sense that there is 'more between heaven and earth' in the works of, among others, Kloos, Van Deyssel, and Van Eeden, he denigrated these manifestations as 'mysticism', as a directionless spiritual quest, which was only a surrogate for true religion. Present-day belletrists sought spiritual fulfilment in life itself, leaving God aside, and took art as a replacement of Christian worship. However, even though explicit, obvious expressions of piety in a poem or novel did not say anything about the artistic quality of a given piece of writing, Meyer insisted that a poem or novel should diffuse the 'spirit of Christ', and that it could only do so if its author lived in an intimate relationship with God.¹¹⁷ Searching for 'religious elements' in Dutch literature published between 1880 and 1920, K.F. Proost basically confirmed Meyer's judgement in a 1922 study. Although he was pleased to see that the materialist, irreligious, and often outright anti-religious attitude to life that had dominated intellectual life before 1900 was no longer in fashion, he was critical of the kind of spirituality surfacing in early twentieth-century literature. What Meyer had castigated as a 'mysticist' undercurrent, Proost deprecatorily referred to as '*wereldvlucht*' or '*levensvlucht*', the escapist tendency to romanticise the past, the exotic or the eccentric, and to dream about otherworldly utopias without inspiring people to reform the here and now. In these disapproving words, Proost's politically socialist creed can clearly be heard: art should enhance social cohesion by inciting public outcry over social wrongs,

114 Censor [A. Carlier], 'Kunst en zede', *De Hervorming* 1897-38 (18 September 1897), 149-150, here 150.

115 J.J. Meyer, 'Kunst en zedelijkheid', *Ibid.* 1907-34 (24 August 1907), 265-266. See also: Meyer, *Kunst en zedelijkheid*, 12-13.

116 Meyer, *Het godsdienstig gehalte in onze nieuwe letterkunde*, 4. He preferred to spell his surname as 'Meyer', but on the title page of this booklet his name is spelled 'Meijer'. For his activities as an art critic in the 1920s and 1930s, see: D. Jansen, *Een kunstenaar op de kansel. Ds. J.J. Meyer (11 oktober 1878 – 18 november 1956)* (Enkhuizen 2010), 70-90.

117 Meyer, *Het godsdienstig gehalte in onze nieuwe letterkunde*, 50-59.

sympathy for the oppressed, and the urge to build a better society.¹¹⁸ At the same time, his liberal Protestant convictions resonated in his condemnation of '*levensvlucht*': "we do not ask for a 'cult of beauty' [art as religion, TK], which is an estrangement from [real] life. We ask for art with meaning, idealistic art, art in service of [the community], because it expresses thoughts [and] breeds ideas. [...] We hope for the unity of aesthetics and ethics. [...] The future will bring faith, religion, beauty. Out of this unity, religious art will develop."¹¹⁹

4 The Modernist Movement and Contemporary Literature: An Evaluation

Was there no one in the diffuse bloc called 'the modernist movement' who had a different approach to literature than that of the modernists referred to above? The answer can only be: hardly anyone, if anyone at all. As already mentioned, there was one letter writer in *De Hervorming* who was not very pleased with modernist reviews of Pierson's writings. However, the person in question, the Mennonite minister W.J. van Douwen (1846-1912), only explicitly disapproved of the supercilious tone modernist reviewers took with Pierson; he did not defend the *content* of Pierson's writings. In 1902, a certain 'C.P.' stressed, more than other modernists dealing with this subject before him, that appreciation of literature can never solely be based on an ethical standard as such. Yet he too maintained that the value of a book ultimately depends on the *intention* with which it has been written. Depending on whether an author writes about immorality with the intention of educating his readership, filling people with disgust, or titillating people's senses, his book is either a valuable contribution to the popularisation of psychological-medical knowledge, a good sermon, or rubbish – but in none of these three cases was it appropriate to speak of 'literature' in an artistic, aesthetic sense. Only if an author writes about immorality in a simple and naïve way as part of human nature, as part of a whole array of human emotions and real-life situations, in order to move people to the depths of their souls, does his book deserve to be called 'good literature'.¹²⁰ Seven years later, J.J. Meyer also emphasised

118 See also: K.F. Proost, 'Hoofdartikel – Socialistische kunst', *De Hervorming* 1922-50 (16 December 1922), 393-394; K.F. Proost, 'Kunst en letteren – Het leven en de kunst', *Ibid.* 1923-12 (24 March 1923), 92-93; K.F. Proost, *Socialistische kunst* (Arnhem 1925).

119 K.F. Proost, *De religie in onze moderne literatuur, 1880-1920* (Zeist 1922), 159-160.

120 C.P., 'lets over het beschrijven van lage dingen in de kunst', *De Hervorming* 1902-20 (17 May 1902), 154-155.

that ethics cannot be the *exclusive* basis of literary criticism: the purpose of art was not moralistic. Yet, believing that ethics and aesthetics are inseparable, he also contended that writing about immorality could be appreciated only to the extent that it plucked people's heartstrings. Again, all came down to the intention of the author.¹²¹

Having already been blamed for having 'vague' religious beliefs and for half-heartedly mixing science and religion, modernists only confirmed intellectuals in their negative opinion of modernism due to their penchant for approving a literary piece only if it contributed to spiritual development. Modernist discourse, in which the idea was expressed that the portrayal of 'unethical' thoughts and behaviours in novels could only be tolerated if it was reduced to a minimum and if it was written with the intention of evoking lofty images and emotions, conflicted with belletrists' own, purely aesthetic, experimental and anti-bourgeois view of literature, and reeked too much of the conservative values of respectability, tranquillity, and conformism voiced by the mid-nineteenth-century 'preacher-poets' who had dominated the Dutch literary scene before the 1880s and whose prose and poetry these belletrists utterly detested. Modernists accused belletrists of neglecting the responsibility they had as opinion formers, the duty to enhance spiritual life; to be and to portray 'spiritual aristocrats', so to speak. Literary reviews published in *De Hervorming* and other liberal Protestant periodicals conveyed the '*burgermansfatsoen*' ('bourgeois morality') – whose moral code focused on thinking and acting 'decently' –, against which belletrists ferociously fulminated in their poems and novels. Moreover, due to their view of literature, modernists could only criticise the elements of idealism and spirituality that they detected in contemporary, particularly early twentieth-century literature as not being 'pure' enough. All in all, in spite of the continuous complaints that their movement did not exert the influence on intellectual life that modernists wanted it to have, modernist discourse maintained and even broadened the gap between modernists and leading Dutch intellectuals.

121 J.J. Meyer, 'Ingezonden stukken – "Onzedelijke" letterkunde', *De Hervorming* 1909-09 (27 February 1909), 70. See also: J.J. Meyer, *Kunst en zedelijkheid* (Baarn 1912), 33.

Becoming a Pillaret

1 The Uncontrollable Need to Organise

In the first issue of *De Hervorming* of 1923, the co-editor H.T. de Graaf, who belonged, together with K.H. Roessingh and G.J. Heering, to the most influential modernist opinion makers of the 1920s, reflected upon contemporary Dutch civil society. His present-day compatriots, he began, seemed to be driven by the uncontrollable need to establish all kinds of voluntary associations, the number of which had become “shockingly” high.¹ To emphasise the intensity with which this need manifested itself, De Graaf mentioned the intention of some to found an association against toy soldiers, which even he, a confirmed pacifist, considered to be ridiculous. He questioned whether all voluntary associations really had a legitimate reason to exist and asked why there were so many of them. Associations, he admitted, were needed because an individual could easily feel lost in the immense society of the present day and because certain goals could only be realised if people joined forces. Yet, in contemporary society, there were numerous associations pursuing the same goal, the only difference between them being the religious or political orientation of their memberships. This was the result, De Graaf stated, of both Roman Catholics’ and orthodox Protestants’ tendency to “huddle together” – in all spheres of life, these groups separated themselves from others (and each other) solely because those others did not have the same faith as they had.²

De Graaf pointed to a phenomenon identified as ‘*verzuiling*’ (‘pillarisation’) in the introductory chapter.³ In the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Netherlands, Roman Catholics, orthodox (predominantly Kuyparian) Protestants and, in some segments of society, social democrats as well began

1 Already in 1907, at the annual NPB meeting, B.D. Eerdmans had made a similar observation: “our age is an age of leagues and associations.” Quoted from: [B.D. Eerdmans in:] ‘Berichten, enz. – De algemeene vergadering’, *De Hervorming* 1907-43 (26 October 1907), 340-342, here 340; [B.D. Eerdmans in:] *Handelingen NPB 1907*, 12-17, here 12.

2 H.T. de Graaf, ‘Godsdienst en maatschappij – Vereenigingen’, *De Hervorming* 1923-01 (6 January 1923), 3-4, here 3.

3 The term ‘pillar’ had been in use in government circles already in the 1930s, but was probably first used in public in *De Telegraaf* on 20 February 1940. ‘Pillarisation theories’ were first formulated in the 1950s. See: J.C.H. Blom, *Verzuiling in Nederland en in het bijzonder op lokaal niveau 1850-1925* (Amsterdam 1981), 11.

to found associations of their own, which were intended to increase their social influence, to ensure that their voice was heard, and, in the case of the first two groups, to ward off external influences deemed 'dangerous' to their faith.⁴ Liberal Protestants, De Graaf argued in his 1923 article, were on the whole "more sensible" than those other groups, preferring not to separately organise themselves in society, but to collaborate with *all* people, irrespective of religious and political differences of opinion, who pursued the actualisation of the same goal.⁵ Associations that were based on similar religious or political principles were connected to each other because they targeted and encompassed the same people, and also because there were all kinds of personal connections between them. They collectively formed an institutionalised subculture or 'zuil' ('pillar'). The pillarisation paradigm that has dominated Dutch historiography as of the 1950s makes a distinction between four pillars: those of the three already-mentioned groups and a 'neutral' or 'general' one. Although it has come to be hotly debated in recent years to what extent Dutch civil society was actually 'pillarised' from the late nineteenth century until the 1970s, and whether it is correct to see social democrat and 'general' associations as constituting two genuine pillars,⁶ it cannot be denied that there was a high degree of organisational, religion-, and politics-based compartmentalisation in the Netherlands when De Graaf wrote his article. De Graaf implied that modernists were against this pillarisation, and so were political liberals. It is therefore not surprising that modernists, rejecting 'clericalism' in general, un-animously championed liberal politics before social democracy became an acceptable alternative, and that the majority of them continued to do so afterwards. Because Roman Catholics, the majority of orthodox Protestants and,

4 Pillarisation as such was not a specifically Dutch phenomenon. Elsewhere in Europe at the end of the nineteenth century, Roman Catholics in particular began to institutionalise their religious subculture within the emerging civil society. See: J.A. Righart, *De katholieke zuil in Europa. Een vergelijkend onderzoek naar de verzuiling onder katholieken in Oostenrijk, Zwitserland, België en Nederland* (Meppel 1986); S. Hellemans, *Strijd om de moderniteit. Sociale bewegingen en verzuiling in Europa sinds 1800* (Leuven 1990).

5 H.T. de Graaf, 'Godsdienst en maatschappij – Vereenigingen', *De Hervorming* 1923-01 (6 January 1923), 3-4, here 3.

6 S. Stuurman, *Verzuiling, kapitalisme en patriërchaat. Aspecten van de ontwikkeling van de moderne staat in Nederland* (Nijmegen 1983), 69-71; P. de Rooy, 'Zes studies over verzuiling', *BMGN CX.3* (1995), 380-392; J.C.H. Blom, 'Vernietigende kracht en nieuwe vergezichten. Het onderzoeksproject verzuiling op lokaal niveau geëvalueerd', in: J.C.H. Blom and J. Talsma (eds.), *De verzuiling voorbij. Godsdienst, stand en natie in de lange negentiende eeuw* (Amsterdam 2000), 203-236; P. de Rooy, 'Voorbij de verzuiling?', *BMGN CXVI.1* (2001), 45-57; P.H. van Dam, *Staat van verzuiling. Over een Nederlandse mythe* (Amsterdam 2011); P.H. van Dam, 'Voorbij verzuiling en ontzuiling als kader in de religiegeschiedenis', in: Van Dam, Kennedy and Wielenga (eds.), *Achter de zuilen*, 31-53.

in some cases, social democrats kept aloof from them, 'general' associations, theoretically not based on shared political or religious principles and open to all, mostly consisted of members whose politics were liberal and who were religiously liberal or at least abhorred the neo-Calvinist character of orthodox Protestant organisations.⁷

However, dissatisfaction with liberal politics and general associations swelled at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century in the modernist movement, and not only among those who became socialists in a political sense. Although there was much reluctance in the modernist movement to found organisations that were not only meant to defend modernist interests – and as the controversy surrounding the establishment of the *Protestantenbond* proves, even the founding of organisations that did have this aim met with great scepticism –, some historians even see a genuine liberal Protestant 'pillar' or something closely resembling a 'pillar' emerging in the two decades between the World Wars.⁸ Why was this the case? Why did some modernists other than those who became socialists begin to feel less satisfied with political liberalism and why did the contours of a modernist pillar emerge?

Just as there were some modernist ministers who joined the SDAP, there were also – and even more – ministers and other modernist opinion leaders who openly promoted liberal politics, were members of a liberal political party, or even represented such a party in municipal councils or parliament. Examples include J. de Louter, A. Bruining, and K. Vos (1874-1924), active members of the conservative *Bond van Vrije Liberalen* (League of Free Liberals or BVL); J. van Loenen Martinet and Ph.A. Kohnstamm (1875-1951), who allied themselves with the progressive *Vrijzinnig-Democratische Bond* (Liberal Democratic League or VDB); and H.Ph. de Kanter, W. de Meijer, P.H.

7 One segment of Dutch Reformed orthodoxy supported Kuypertian politics and participated in the orthodox Protestant pillar, while another segment did not and favoured 'general' associations. See: Van Eijnatten and Van Lieburg, *Nederlandse religiegeschiedenis*, 287.

8 Verwey-Jonker, *Emancipatiebewegingen in Nederland*, 88; J.C.H. Blom, "Het geloof van de radio op vrijdagavond". Aspecten van de geschiedenis van de Vrijzinnig Protestantse Radio Omroep 1926-1968, in: J.H.J. van den Heuvel et al., *Een vrij zinnige verhouding. De VPRO en Nederland 1926-1986* (Baarn 1986), 73-146, here 84-92; Schuurisma, *Jaren van opgang*, 191; Barnard, *Van "verstoten kind" tot belijdende kerk*, 306; Van der Meiden, "Zoo heerlijk eenvoudig", 202; M.B. ter Borg, *Vrijzinnigen hebben de toekomst. Een essay* (Zoetermeer 2010), 98; Vuyk, *Het einde der remonstranten*, 31. Lucardie states that liberal Protestants did not have a genuine pillar of their own; there were only 'building stones' for such a pillar. See: A.P.M. Lucardie, *Nederland stromenland. Een geschiedenis van de politieke stromingen* (Assen [1985] 2002), 33. Dutch comedian Wim Kan (1911-1983) said that liberal Protestants formed a "*stokje*" ('stick') rather than a pillar. As mentioned by: Lijphart, *Verzuiling, pacificatie en kentering*, 57.

Roessingh (1840-1916), and B.D. Eerdmans, who all served as members of the Second Chamber on behalf of the moderate *Liberale Unie* (Liberal Union). This chapter does not focus on the position they and liberal Protestantism in general held in these parties. Likewise, it does not concern itself with the participation and position of modernists in voluntary associations with a 'neutral' basis, constituting the 'general' pillar, either. As mentioned before, the fact that religious and political liberals were overrepresented in general associations had less to do with the intention of these groups to dominate those associations than with the practice of religious and political non-liberals to found associations exclusively based on their own principles.

The aim of this chapter is to analyse the motivations behind modernist complaints about political liberalism, and to argue that this dissatisfaction was part of a larger feeling of discomfort about the direction in which Dutch society was developing and the position modernists had in this society. It does so by interpreting discussions on political liberalism on the basis of five case studies of successful and less successful initiatives intended to organise modernists as a separate group, or at least to increase modernists' visibility and influence in certain sectors of society: the Association for the Support of the Uncared-For and Fallen Women, founded in 1886; proposals for founding schools on modernist principles; the *Vrijzinnig-Christelijke Studentenbond* and *Vrijzinnig-Christelijke Jongerenbond* (Liberal Christian Youth League or VCJB), created in the 1910s; initiatives to link politically liberal modernists more closely together in the 1910s to 1930s; and the *Vrijzinnig-Protestantsche Radio-Omroep* (Liberal Protestant Radio Broadcasting Corporation or VPRO), established in 1926.

2 Politically Liberal 'by Nature'

In November 1877, shortly after the inauguration of a new government solely composed of men with liberal political views, a certain 'K.' wrote a lyrical article in *De Hervorming*. Referring to the modernist movement as a monolithic bloc, he stated that modernists were overjoyed by this development, and informed the members of the new cabinet that they could be assured of modernists' ongoing support and sympathy. "This," he explained,

should be a surprise to no one. Modernists belong to the liberal party by nature. They want progress and development, and do not shrink from fighting and sacrificing if necessary to achieve the desired goal. The modern state is dear to them and can count on their zeal and power against its enemies, who are out for its destruction. Reforms in accordance with

what the present day demands is also our motto, reform in all spheres of civil life.⁹

Ten years later, Ph. Hugenholtz, Jr. repeated the above statement that modernists were politically liberal 'by nature'.¹⁰ Indeed, during the formative and earliest developmental phases of the modernist movement, modernism and political liberalism were seen as two sides of the same coin. In the 1870s and 1880s, article writers in *De Hervorming* always used pronouns in the first person plural when they referred to liberalism in a political sense and simply assumed that all modernists had liberal leanings.¹¹ The Dutch Reformed minister A.F. Mackenstein assimilated the destiny of modernism as a religious current to that of liberalism; the latter was the political current "that we love" and the *only* political current "of which we expect any good for our country."¹² J.C. Matthes (1836-1917), an eminent modern biblical scholar who rarely voiced his opinion on non-theological issues, totally agreed: when the liberals lost the by-elections held in several electoral districts in 1885, he stressed that there was a "close connection" between liberal politics and the modernist movement and that "the opportunities for our movement diminish if the political right wing [Roman Catholics and orthodox Protestants, ТК] gains ground."¹³ Before 1900, political ideas that deviated from liberalism were highly controversial in the modernist movement, as the commotion Van Loenen Martinet's stand against private landownership caused in 1892, dealt with in chapter 7, makes especially clear. Making a joke about the matter yet actually hitting the nail on the head, Van Loenen Martinet responded that he was only allowed to address political issues in *De Hervorming* if he docilely followed "the direction mapped out by the Liberal Union."¹⁴

9 [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'Het nieuwe ministerie', *De Hervorming* 1877-46 (17 November 1877), 1.

10 Mentioned in: Kuiper, 'In het krachtenveld van beschaving en godsdienst', 131.

11 E.g.: [B.C.J. Mosselmans and J. van Gilse], '10 Juni 1873', *De Hervorming* 1873-23 (5 June 1873), 1; J. van Gilse, 'Wat de "Hervorming" weet', *Ibid.* 1875-30 (29 July 1875), 1-2; R., 'Het recht der minderheid', *Ibid.* 1877-23 (9 June 1877), 1-2, here 1; [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'Binnenland – Nieuwe bezwaren aan de neutraliteit der openbare school ontleend', *Ibid.* 1881-26 (2 July 1881), 102-103, here 103; H.S., 'Binnenland – Meditatie', *Ibid.* 1883-35 (1 September 1883), 139; H. de Lang, "'Uilenspiegel'", *Ibid.* 1893-10 (11 March 1893), 38. See also: A.D.H. Huysman, 'Godsdienstige vrijzinnigheid en politiek liberalisme (1840-1940)', *Civis Mundi* xxvii.2 (1988), 70-73, here 70-71; Krijger, 'Een vrijzinnige meneer', 51-52.

12 A.F. Mackenstein, 'Kroniek', *De Hervorming* 1874-28 (9 July 1874), 1-2, here 2.

13 [J.C. Matthes], 'Lichtpunten', *Ibid.* 1885-17 (25 April 1885), 65-66, here 65.

14 [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Over den bijzonderen grondeigendom', *Ibid.* 1892-41 (8 October 1892), 162-163, here 162.

The Liberal Union was founded in 1885 with the intention of tightening the bonds among all politicians who self-identified as liberals, and hence to check the rise of Roman Catholics' and orthodox Protestants' political influence. Feeling that voting rights and social legislation should be expanded as soon as possible, a group of progressive dissidents left the Union in 1892 and 1901, and established the Liberal Democratic League in 1901. A second group, consisting of conservative liberals who opposed party discipline, any enlargement of government power, and general enfranchisement, began to secede from the Union from 1894 onwards and created the League of Free Liberals in 1906. With the implementation of universal suffrage at the end of the 1910s, resulting in a spectacular marginalisation of liberalism as a political current – the Liberal Union alone lost fifteen of its twenty-one seats in parliament –, reunification became a strong desire among liberals. While the VDB kept itself apart, the Liberal Union and the BVL merged, together with several recently founded, liberal-oriented splinter parties, into the *Liberale Staatspartij 'de Vrijheidsbond'* (Liberal State Party 'the Freedom League') in 1921.¹⁵ As stated before, all of these parties received significant support from modernists.

Modernists who turned away from liberalism, as well as later generations of modernists, acknowledged that their co-religionists' solidarity with political liberalism had been so strong in the nineteenth century that the general public continued to identify the modernist movement in its entirety with liberal politics.¹⁶ At a meeting of modernists in the province of North Holland in 1909, J.T. Tenthoff lamented that this was the main reason why blue-collar workers' estrangement from the modernist movement was so persistent.¹⁷ In 1926, G.J. Heering expressed an equally negative judgement, mockingly describing the decades prior to 1900 as "[those] happy times, when every religious liberal was automatically a political liberal."¹⁸

Even after socialism had become an acceptable political alternative to liberalism in the modernist movement, in the 1900s and 1910s, the great majority of

15 I. Lipschits, *Politieke stromingen in Nederland. Inleiding tot de geschiedenis van de Nederlandse politieke partijen* (Deventer [1977] 1982), 33–39.

16 In 1895, Van Loenen Martinet was one of the first to see that modernists were no longer blindly following liberal politicians. See: [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Politieke preeken', *De Hervorming* 1895–12 (23 March 1895), 46.

17 [J.T. Tenthoff in:] 'Berichten, enz. – De Noord-Hollandsche Predikantenvereeniging', *Ibid.* 1909–27 (3 July 1909), 213–214; J.T. Tenthoff, 'De reactionaire strooming onder de protestanten, hare oorzaken en hare beteekenis voor het innerlijk en uiterlijk godsdienstig leven', *Teekenen des Tijds* XI (1909), 233–262, here 255–256.

18 G.J. Heering, 'Sociale en a-sociale religie', *De Hervorming* 1926–43 (23 October 1926), 340–341, here 341.

modernists could still be counted among the champions of liberal politics.¹⁹ In 1917, K. Vos estimated that ninety per cent of all who identified themselves as liberal Protestants did not hold socialist political views – which meant that, considering modernists' dislike of political parties based on dogmatic religious principles, “far more than ninety per cent firmly cling to the old liberal traditions,” as K.H. Roessingh remarked in 1925.²⁰ Particularly in response to socialist modernists' claim that socialism was the true political fulfilment of Christianity, some continued to maintain that liberal Protestantism and liberal politics ‘naturally’ belonged together. Because liberals' political principles – summed up in the word ‘freedom’ – were more in line with the spirit of Jesus than the political principles of those who explicitly adorned their politics with his name, as the modernist Reformed minister P. Bruining (1850-1945) maintained in his 1906 brochure *De politiek-vrijzinnigen en het christendom* (*The Political Liberals and Christianity*), the cause liberal politicians defended was essentially a *religious* cause. As the latter were trying to realise in the political domain what modernists were trying to realise through their religious faith, both groups formed a ‘natural’ alliance.²¹ Without advocating liberal politics as such, M.C. van Mourik Broekman argued in 1918 that it was perfectly natural that “modernism as a religious movement has historically and psychologically allied itself to liberalism as a current in the world of thought,” for both were essentially individual-centred.²² D. Hans, an influential journalist who sympathised with the Liberal State Party and chaired the NPB branch in The Hague between 1928 and 1945, pursued this same line of reasoning. Most people only used ‘liberalism’ in a political sense, to refer to a current that sought the actualisation of ‘democracy’, which Hans defined as the liber-

19 Roessingh, *Het modernisme in Nederland*, 208; Verwey-Jonker, *Emancipatiebewegingen in Nederland*, 87; Klooster, *Het vrijzinnig protestantisme in Nederland*, 53.

20 K. Vos, ‘Ingezonden – Teekenen des tijds’, *De Hervorming* 1917-50 (15 December 1917), 419-420, here 419; K.H. Roessingh, ‘Jeugdbeweging en vrijzinnigheid’, *Ibid.* 1925-04 (24 January 1925), 26-27, here 26. Notwithstanding modernists' categorical rejection of confessional politics, a tiny minority eventually came to support the *Christelijk-Historische Unie* (Christian Historical Union or CHU), in which (moderate) Dutch Reformed orthodoxy set the tone. See: Van Driel, ‘Hand in hand?’, 132. H.T. de Graaf stated that he felt sympathy for the CHU, but could not support it, as this party interpreted religion too narrowly in an orthodox sense and favoured private schools based on orthodox Protestant principles. See: H.T. de Graaf, ‘Godsdienst en maatschappij – Van de stembus’, *De Hervorming* 1922-23 (10 June 1922), 179-181, here 179; T.E.M. Krijger, ‘Een veldheer met vele legers. De partijpolitieke erfenis van Guillaume Groen van Prinsterer’, *Trajecta* XXIV.1 (2015), 85-120, here 93-95.

21 P. Bruining, *De politiek-vrijzinnigen en het christendom* (Almelo [1906]).

22 M.C. van Mourik Broekman, ‘Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Her-ijk’, *De Hervorming* 1918-29 (20 July 1918), 113.

ation of individuals from all obstacles hindering them from being truly free. Therefore, liberal politicians were sceptical about government interference in society, but at the same time felt that some social laws were needed. After all, individuals could only become *personalities*, autonomous beings who lived up to their full potential, if they were not totally preoccupied with earning their daily bread. Yet, liberalism not only manifested itself as a political current; it was a distinct worldview and philosophy of life, in which the intrinsic value of the individual personality was central. Spiritually, Hans claimed, liberalism manifested itself as liberal Protestantism. Liberal politics attempted to create the necessary conditions for 'democracy', while liberal Protestantism attempted to do justice to the individual personality and hence to endue individuals with a 'democratic spirit'. In other words, liberal politics and liberal Protestantism were both manifestations of a single philosophy of life called 'liberalism'.²³

Founded on the ideas of philosophers such as John Locke (1632-1704) and Montesquieu (1689-1755), who championed the emancipation of individuals from state churches and absolute monarchy, and the theories of economists such as Adam Smith (1723-1790), Thomas Malthus (1766-1834), and David Ricardo (1772-1823), who rejected strong government interference in economic life at both the national (*laissez-faire*) and the international level (free trade), liberalism was already an established and influential current in politics when the modernist movement emerged. That liberalism and modernism in the Netherlands became closely linked immediately after the rise of the latter, had to do, as Van Driel briefly notes, with three factors. First, there were ties between several liberal politicians and prominent modernist families. Second, political liberalism and liberal Protestantism both had their (largest) following among the bourgeoisie and farmers. These last two terms are not specified by Van Driel, but particularly the term 'farmers' needs some explanation. In the early nineteenth century, parts of the moneyed bourgeois elite in urban areas and large landowners in rural regions developed a civil culture of which political liberalism and a non-dogmatic approach to Christianity were constitutive elements. Parts of the petty bourgeoisie, or lower middle class, and parts of the farming class oriented themselves to the politically and religiously liberal culture of the groups directly above them, as liberalism was seen to best serve their economic interests and social aspirations. In rural areas, where the bourgeoisie was small or absent, an agrarian equivalent to the bourgeoisie

23 [D. Hans in:] 'Berichten en mededeelingen – Liberalisme en democratie', *De Hervorming* 1931-04 (11 April 1931), 29-30. Hans put forward the same arguments in: D. Hans, *Liberalisme en protestantisme. Iets over het verband tusschen de staatkundig-liberale beginselen en de religie* (The Hague 1930), 31-51.

emerged, similar in status and wealth to the urban middle class. Liberalism and modernism found support among *these* farmers – not among the so-called ‘peasantry’ or agricultural equivalent to the industrial proletariat.²⁴ Third, Van Driel states that political liberalism and liberal Protestantism shared a strong belief in reason and progress, stressed the value of the individual personality, and appealed to individuals’ moral sense. Hence, they advanced each other’s development and growth.²⁵

The political scientist Stuurman feels that political liberalism and liberal Protestantism were tied together to such an extent and for so long that, rather than their constituting a neutral or general pillar, one should speak of a ‘*liberaal-vrijzinnige sfeer*’ (‘liberal-modernist sphere’) alongside the Roman Catholic and orthodox Protestant pillars and the socialist movement in the first half of the twentieth century.²⁶ Although, as this chapter argues, such a clear-cut equating of liberalism with modernism obscures dissatisfaction within the modernist movement with liberal politics and the formally ‘neutral’ organisations placed by Stuurman within this ‘liberal-modernist sphere’, a closer look at liberal political culture does indeed show that views dominant in this culture were also dominant in modernism. And this, in turn, helps explain why liberalism exerted such an attraction on modernists, both in the late nineteenth and in the early twentieth century.

Until the rise of social democracy, liberalism was the most progressive political current in the Netherlands. Conservatism with its opposition to institutional state reform disappeared in the Dutch context as a distinct political current at the end of the nineteenth century. The emerging anti-revolutionary and Roman Catholic political currents rejected the notion of popular sovereignty and were based on the idea that society should not be organised in opposition to the ‘organic’ structures God had implanted in his Creation. Liberalism, on the other hand, aspired to reform society in such a way that the individual had as much freedom as possible to live his own life without violating the freedom

24 V.C. Sleebe, *In termen van fatsoen. Sociale controle in het Groningse kleigebied 1770-1914* (Assen 1994), 54; Y. Botke, *Boer en heer. De ‘Groninger boer’ 1760-1960* (Assen 2002), 10, 364-366; P.J. van Cruyningen, *Boeren aan de macht? Boerenemancipatie en machtsverhoudingen op het Gelderse platteland, 1880-1930* (Hilversum 2010), 196-202. Te Velde argues that modernism and political liberalism became entangled because both groups were “first and foremost movements of the bourgeoisie.” Quoted from: H. te Velde, *Gemeenschapszin en plichtsbesef. Liberalisme en nationalisme in Nederland* (The Hague 1992), 39.

25 Van Driel, ‘Hand in hand?’, 107.

26 Stuurman, *Verzuiling, kapitalisme en patriarchaat*, 60; F.A. Groot, *Roomsen, rechtzinnigen en nieuwlichters. Verzuiling in een Hollandse plattelandsgemeente, Naaldwijk 1850-1930* (Hilversum 1992), 248.

of other individuals.²⁷ This did not mean that all liberal politicians thought the same about the pace and intensity with which, for example, voting rights should be extended or social laws should be promulgated – certainly not, as the eventual division of liberalism into progressive, moderate, and conservative parties makes clear –, but they were all essentially driven by this ideal of individual freedom.²⁸ As such, liberalism was the political manifestation of the emancipation of the bourgeoisie that had set in with the French Revolution of 1789. It served bourgeois interests by breaking the power of the old first and second estates, the aristocracy and the clergy, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and thereby paved the way for a civil culture in which the bourgeoisie set the standards from the mid-nineteenth century onwards.²⁹

Although they did not reject state intervention in social life altogether – the progressive liberal undercurrent emerging in the 1870s was particularly open to government measures intended to counteract pauperism –, liberals gave preference to private enterprise.³⁰ Moreover, all measures made to improve the lives of lower-class people, whether in the form of legislation or philanthropy, should always be aimed at making the poor and needy independent of material support from others. They ought to turn the poor and needy into *individuals* who were capable of making conscious and reasonable decisions, into *citizens* who were able to restrain themselves and to live a life just as 'virtuous' and 'refined' as the higher classes.³¹ It was the moral duty of the bourgeoisie to assist the poor and needy in becoming such self-responsible citizens. In practice, this meant imparting bourgeois manners, norms, and beliefs about 'proper' behaviour to the lower classes. '*Fatsoen*' ('respectability' or 'decency') was a central notion in bourgeois culture. As the historian Leenders shows, the term came to express what being a 'citizen' was all about from the mid-nineteenth century onwards.³² A liberal outlook on life and a liberal worldview were seen as intrinsic elements of being 'decent'. Although some of them

27 Conservatism as a political current merged into the BVL and the CHU. See: R.A.A.G.M. van Raak, *In naam van het volmaakte. Conservatisme in Nederland in de negentiende eeuw van Gerrit Jan Mulder tot Jan Heemskerk Azn.* (Amsterdam 2001), 185–188.

28 There was reluctance among liberals to grant voting rights to the class below the bourgeoisie; parliamentary democracy as such became virtually unchallenged in liberal circles only around 1910. See: K.E. van der Mandele, *Het liberalisme in Nederland. Schets van de ontwikkeling in de negentiende eeuw* (Arnhem 1933), 206–237; Te Velde, *Gemeenschapszin en plichtsbefef*, 190–191; De Beaufort and Van Schie, *Sociaal-liberalisme*, 21–22.

29 Blaas, *De burgerlijke eeuw*, 77–80.

30 De Beaufort and Van Schie, *Sociaal-liberalisme*, 39–56.

31 Te Velde, *Gemeenschapszin en plichtsbefef*, 105–106.

32 J.M.M. Leenders, *Benauwde verdraagzaamheid, hachelijk fatsoen. Families, standen en kerken te Hoorn in het midden van de negentiende eeuw* (The Hague 1991), 239–241.

came to believe around 1900 that morality should be a subject of political debate, liberals, in contrast to confessionalists, argued that decency as such was no subject of concern for the government. What was considered 'decent' should be decided within society itself and promoted through initiatives citizens themselves created.³³ Of course, this meant that the culturally dominant liberal bourgeoisie both had the power to decide, and the responsibility to promote, what was 'decent', by means of all kinds of voluntary associations.

In this respect, recent historiography often uses the term '*beschavingsoffensief*' ('civilising offensive'), defined as "more or less resolute activities to change the values, conventions, and behaviours of certain population groups through social control."³⁴ Liberals were certainly not the only ones involved in such activities. Orthodox Protestants united in the rather elitist mid-nineteenth-century *Réveil* movement, for example, created initiatives to disseminate their moral norms and ideas about respectability among the lower classes as well.³⁵ Moreover, during the process of pillarisation, which intensified after 1900, a discourse on civilisation was common as well. The Catholic clergy and orthodox Protestant ministers, some historians argue, used the emerging pillars as means to establish social control among the faithful, as well as to discipline the faithful and ultimately the entire nation, in accordance with church morals.³⁶ Socialist leaders' political mobilisation of the working class was accompanied by an attempt to educate labourers and to develop a working-class socialist culture in which teetotalism, self-control, frugality, and domesticity were key values.³⁷ Nonetheless, the term 'civilising offensive' is mostly used exclusively in reference to philanthropic initiatives and voluntary associations that were not created by the government, not explicitly linked to one denomination or based on specific theological-dogmatic principles, and intended to uplift the dregs of society and supported by the politically liberal bourgeoisie in the nineteenth century. The most pre-eminent representative of this nineteenth-century liberal-bourgeois civilising offensive is the

33 Te Velde, *Gemeenschapszin en plichtsbef*, 185-189, 205-206.

34 Sleebe, *In termen van fatsoen*, 27.

35 W.J. Hoekstra, *Het hart van de natie. Morele verontwaardiging en politieke verandering in Nederland, 1870-1919* (Amsterdam 2005), 112. Dubois challenges this approach. According to him, speaking about the *Réveil* movement in terms of 'civilisation' obscures that this movement primarily aimed to bring people to Christ. See: O.W. Dubois, *Reddende liefde. Het werk van de Heldringstichtingen in Zetten 1847-2010* (Hilversum 2010), 19-20.

36 Sleebe, *In termen van fatsoen*, 29; P.C.M. Bakker, J.M.A. Noordman and M. Rietveld-van Wingerden, *Vijf eeuwen opvoeden in Nederland. Idee en praktijk, 1500-2000* (Assen 2006), 234-237.

37 Te Velde, 'How High did the Dutch Fly?', 72-75; F.W. Boterman and P. de Rooy, *Op de grens van twee culturen. Nederland en Duitsland in het fin de siècle* (Amsterdam 1999), 35.

Maatschappij tot Nut van 't Algemeen.³⁸ Founded in 1784, this society aimed to spread the newest ideas and ideals concerning social hygiene and personal development among those who did not have the means or capacities to pick up these ideas and ideals on their own. Associations such as the *Nut* tried to turn lower-class people into decent 'citizens', in order to foster a sense of civic self-responsibility or 'community spirit and a sense of duty', by teaching them how to think and behave like the classes above them.³⁹ Although their principles were not rooted in a specific theological system, these associations were dominated by adherents of rationalistic supernaturalism at the beginning of the nineteenth century, primarily supported by the Groningen movement in the middle of that century, and increasingly joined by modernists as of the 1860s. At the local level, members of the NPB, the *Nut*, and liberal electoral associations often formed a close network. In some places, as stated in chapter 1, the local department of the *Nut* became the basis for the founding of a local branch of the NPB.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the civilising offensive served one particular interest of the central government: it promoted national unification. The Netherlands had only recently become a unitary state. Before 1795, the Dutch regions were loosely allied to each other in a confederate republic and had enjoyed a large degree of legislative and judicial self-determination. That year, a central government was created that, influenced by, and as of 1806 directly under the control of, France, tried to instil the inhabitants of Friesland, Holland, Gelderland, and the other Dutch regions in a nationalistic-ethnic sense of belonging together as a way of strengthening its own authority. When the former Austrian Netherlands, the present-day regions of Flanders and Wallonia, were added to the old Dutch Republic in 1815, the need for such a common sense of belonging became even more pressing. The central government attempted to create a 'Netherlandic' identity to ensure that all inhabitants of what was now called the 'United Kingdom of the Nether-

38 Kruithof, 'De deugdzame natie', 70; W.W. Mijnhardt and A.J. Wichers, *Om het algemeen volksgeluk. Twee eeuwen particulier initiatief, 1784-1984: gedenkboek ter gelegenheid van het tweehonderdjarig bestaan van de Maatschappij tot Nut van 't Algemeen* (Edam 1984); Bakker, Noordman and Rietveld-van Wingerden, *Vijf eeuwen opvoeden in Nederland*, 196; Mijnhardt, however, is hesitant to refer to the activities of the Society for Public Advancement with the term 'civilising offensive', as it suggests that the *Nut* simply treated the lowest classes as passive 'receivers' of knowledge. See: W.W. Mijnhardt, *Tot heil van 't mensdom. Culturele genootschappen in Nederland, 1750-1815* (Amsterdam 1987), 293-294.

39 The terms 'community spirit' and 'sense of duty' as characterisation of the liberal-bourgeois civilising offensive refer to the title of Te Velde's 1992 dissertation *Gemeenschapszin en plichtsbefef*.

lands' would loyally support it; in particular, it stimulated Dutch Reformed ministers and the *Maatschappij tot Nut van 't Algemeen* to actively propagate patriotism and social stability.⁴⁰ After the secession of Flanders and Wallonia from the Netherlands in 1830, which meant that the project to unify the historical Low Countries in a single nation-state had failed, '*volksseenheid*' ('national unity') nonetheless remained a strong motive for the liberal-bourgeois civilising offensive.⁴¹ Because they considered pauperism, immorality, and a lack of education to be potential threats to civil harmony, political liberals stimulated private enterprises such as the *Nut* to help those suffering from these evils in becoming tolerant, decent, and self-supporting citizens. They feared that if social changes occurred in the form of revolutionary radicalism rather than evolutionary reform, all kinds of forces would be unleashed in the lowest strata of society that could not be stopped and would ultimately disrupt society in its entirety. Political liberals regarded religious fanaticism as a threat to civil harmony as well. Although they felt that state interference in social life should be limited, and although it had been a liberal politician, J.R. Thorbecke, who allowed for the possibility of founding denominational schools in his 1848 constitutional reform, political liberals themselves generally favoured 'neutral' state or public schools. They feared that education based on dogmatic principles would increase social tensions, and favoured a government policy that gave preferential financial treatment to public schools.⁴² Since Roman Catholics and orthodox Protestants, on the contrary, demanded an equal treatment of public and denominational education, a fierce conflict of interests, known as the 'school struggle', pervaded Dutch politics and ended in a confessionalist victory only in 1917.

Nineteenth-century political liberals advocated a '*christendom boven geloofsverdeeldheid*' ('Christianity above religious differences'), what would nowadays perhaps best be called a 'public religion' – a general belief in God and general behavioural norms seen as intrinsic to the Christian tradition, such as a tolerant attitude towards people with different beliefs and a strong

40 N.H. Bijleveld, *Voor God, Volk en Vaderland. De plaats van de hervormde predikant binnen de nationale eenwordingsprocessen in Nederland in de eerste helft van de negentiende eeuw* (Delft 2007), 36, 93, 142, 162–164; Th.H.G. Verhoeven, *Ter vorming van verstand en hart. Lager onderwijs in oostelijk Noord-Brabant, ca. 1770–1920* (Hilversum 1994), 19.

41 Te Velde, *Gemeenschapszin en plichtsbef*, 15, 19–30.

42 Van der Mandele, *Het liberalisme in Nederland*, 184–195; P.Th.F.M. Boekholt, 'Naar een gedifferentieerd onderwijssysteem, 1860–1920', in: P.Th.F.M. Boekholt and E.P. de Booy, *Geschiedenis van de school in Nederland vanaf de middeleeuwen tot aan de huidige tijd* (Assen 1987), 149–228, here 149, 221; R. de Jong, *Van standspolitiek naar partijloyaliteit. Verkiezingen voor de Tweede Kamer 1848–1887* (Hilversum 1999), 131.

desire to serve the community, as the cement of social life.⁴³ In this public religion, what the nature of God is and what exactly constitutes the Christian tradition were intentionally left unspecified, in the hope that no one would take umbrage at such a religion and almost all citizens could identify with it. Roman Catholics and anti-revolutionaries, however, found no satisfaction in such a vague interpretation of Christianity; rather, they envisaged a pluralistic society in which citizens were not forced to act as if all Dutch people thought, worshipped, and aspired the same way. Their growing influence in politics and society, fuelled by the 'school struggle', made liberals uneasy.⁴⁴ Modernists, though they only sporadically described their aspiration to permeate society with an 'updated' Christianity in those very words, more or less shared liberals' ideal of a 'Christianity above religious differences'; they too felt that opposing theological views and ecclesial heterogeneity should be irrelevant in social life.⁴⁵ Moreover, their 'enemies' in the sphere of church and religion were the same ones against whom liberals fought in the political arena. Although some early modernists, among them C.W. Opzoomer, argued that the state should have the authority to supervise church life, primarily to prevent the Roman Catholic Church and orthodox Protestants from accentuating the dogmatic differences of opinion existing among Dutch citizens, the feeling that state and church should be entirely separate was dominant in the modernist movement.⁴⁶ And although some of its adherents thought like Opzoomer, political liberalism as such used 'the separation of church and state' as one of its battle cries: the government and state-financed institutions, such as public schools and universities, including theological faculties, should be 'neutral' in the sense that they should not favour one philosophy of life over others.⁴⁷

3 Non-socialist Modernist Criticism on Political Liberalism

Politically liberal discourse thus bore a great deal of resemblance to modernist discourse. Yet there were concerns among modernists that liberal politicians

43 The term is usually attributed to Thorbecke and specifically used in reference to public education.

44 Liberals considered one's theological viewpoints as a strictly private affair. See: Aerts, *De letterheren*, 197.

45 Te Velde, *Gemeenschapszin en plichtsbef*, 38-41.

46 C.W. Opzoomer, *Scheiding van kerk en staat* (Amsterdam 1875). Opzoomer was challenged by: L.W.E. Rauwenhoff, *Staat en kerk. Het stelsel van mr. C.W. Opzoomer bestreden* (Leiden 1875). See also: Buitenwerf-van der Molen, *God van vooruitgang*, 141.

47 Van der Mandele, *Het liberalisme in Nederland*, 173-177.

tended to interpret the separation of church and state as a separation of religion and society. Moreover, the 'Christianity above religious differences' liberal politicians claimed to advocate often looked like religious indifference in modernists' eyes. As early as the 1870s, such complaints could be heard. In 1873, for example, A.F. Mackensteen, who believed that the future of modernism depended on liberals' political power, denounced "the awful faintheartedness of many liberals."⁴⁸ Political liberals tried to uplift the nation, but, as their fellow liberal H.Ph. de Kanter argued in 1875, they failed to see that the pre-eminent instrument for doing this was the Dutch Reformed Church and that they should therefore make common cause with modernists. It was due to their "reprehensible, constant, dreadful indifference in ecclesial affairs" that the Dutch Reformed Church was falling prey to orthodoxy, and was therefore on its way to becoming totally useless for uplifting the nation.⁴⁹ A year later, De Kanter urged all politically liberal candidates to make clear whether religion had any political meaning to them or not, and asserted that they only deserved modernists' support if they gave an affirmative answer.⁵⁰ In his 1877 article in which he claimed modernists were politically liberal 'by nature', even the previously cited 'K.' argued that liberals did not deserve modernists' support unconditionally: "[liberals] feel that the state should be religionless. [. . .] We can understand, not share this opinion. We can understand it, since liberals confuse religion with the church." A couple of lines earlier in this same article, 'K.' chided liberals for deluding themselves by failing to realise that "it is a lie that the state has nothing to do with religion – on the contrary, social life should be permeated with, and guided by, religion in its entirety, and the state should do its bit [to accomplish this]."⁵¹

Similar sentiments increased and were uttered more often from the 1880s onwards – not only by modernists who felt attracted to socialism or eventually joined the SDAP, but also by those who continued to loyally support liberal politicians. At a meeting of ministers in the Alkmaar region in 1884, for example, the Dutch Reformed F. Pijper (1859-1926) noted with regret that some

48 A.F. Mackensteen, 'Kroniek', *De Hervorming* 1873-28 (10 July 1873), 3.

49 A.B., 'Vooruitzichten der godsdienst', *Ibid.* 1875-27 (8 July 1875), 1-2, here 2.

50 [H.Ph. de Kanter in:] 'Mededeelingen betreffende het Nederlandsch Protestantenvond', *Ibid.* 1876-11 (16 March 1876), 3. Goeman Borgesius strongly disputed this view. Judging candidates by their principles of life was exactly what confessionalists did. Political candidates should only be judged by their *political* views and intellectual capacities. During the 1876 annual NPB meeting, De Kanter, together with I. Hooykaas, again scolded his fellow liberals for their religious indifference. See: [I. Hooykaas and H.Ph. de Kanter in:] 'Protestantendag', *Ibid.* 1876-49 (7 December 1876), 2-4, here 3.

51 [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'Het nieuwe ministerie', *Ibid.* 1877-46 (17 November 1877), 1.

liberal politicians tried to make it legally impossible for ministers to be politically active. This was the result of a misinterpretation of what a separation between church and state entailed, and was all the more regrettable, as the modernists among ministers with political aspirations wanted precisely to reinforce the liberal ranks. Moreover, Pijper lamented that liberals habitually refrained from differentiating between orthodox and modernist Christianity and in some cases even had an undisguised contempt for religious outlooks on life altogether. His lecture brought the dissension among the modernist ministers present at the meeting into the open: some, fearing that liberalism would otherwise turn into confessionalism, argued that religion should be kept out of political life, while others, seeing political life as an integral part of social life in general, asserted that it should also permeate politics.⁵² One of the latter, E.J.W. Koch, therefore applauded the initiative several modernist members of an electoral committee in Brielle took later that year of only nominating a liberal who actively participated in the modernist movement.⁵³

When the *Doleantie* erupted in 1886, Van Loenen Martinet argued that Kuypers and his sympathisers had been able to gain an influential position in church, state, and society because liberal politicians had grossly underestimated the potential that religion had as a mobilising force. Liberal politicians had made the mistake of merely dismissing confessionalism without promoting a better – that is, modernist – religious alternative.⁵⁴ Van Loenen Martinet and others would later put forward this argument several times.⁵⁵ H.Ph. de Kanter felt that modernists should also take some of the blame themselves: their movement would have been considerably more influential in society if modernists had not categorically allied themselves with a liberalism charac-

52 [F. Pijper in: S.P. Heringa], 'Binnenland – Welke houding behoort de vrijzinnige predikant aan te nemen ten opzichte van het antireligieuze karakter van veler liberale politiek?', *De Hervorming* 1884-04 (26 January 1884), 14.

53 E.J.W. Koch, 'Religieusiteit in den volksvertegenwoordiger onmisbaar', *Ibid.* 1884-43 (25 October 1884), 171-172.

54 [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Juist ter snede', *Ibid.* 1886-04 (23 January 1886), 14.

55 L.M.B., 'Ingezonden stukken', *Ibid.* 1888-01 (7 January 1888), 4; C.B. Spruyt, 'Scheiding van kerk en staat', *Ibid.* 1888-08 (25 February 1888), 30; B. Tideman Jz., 'De fout der oud-liberalen', *Ibid.* 1889-11 (16 March 1889), 41-42; [J. van Loenen Martinet in:] 'De Protestantendag te Deventer', *Ibid.* 1889-44 (2 November 1889), 174; Censor [A. Carlier] and H. de Lang, 'De schoolkwestie', *Ibid.* 1901-10 (9 March 1901), 75-76; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Godsdienst en politiek', *Ibid.* 1901-32 (10 August 1901), 249-250; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Berichten, enz. – Onder ongunstige omstandigheden', *Ibid.* 1903-40 (3 October 1903), 316-317, here 316.

terised by religious indifference.⁵⁶ He thus suggested that modernists should have been more critical of liberalism not only as a political current, but also as a *culture*. Modernists fully contributed to the liberal-bourgeois civilising offensive, but felt that it was not enough to help people in becoming autonomous citizens – creating autonomous *religious* citizens was their ultimate aim. After all, decency, as explained in chapter 6, was seen as inherently connected to reasonableness and piety in modernist thinking. As the controversy on district nursing exemplifies, there was much reluctance among modernists to organise themselves as a separate group outside the domain of the church – after all, organised activities in which lower-class people received guidance from the bourgeois classes ought not to be conducted with the intention of turning the former into religious liberals as such. Nonetheless, modernists did hope that such activities would implicitly advance the free development of religious life – having contact with ‘spiritual aristocrats’, they believed, would ultimately not fail to have a good effect. Yet, as Van Loenen Martinet stated in 1895, the feeling that liberalism had not always been beneficial to the advancement of the free development of religious life had taken root among modernists.⁵⁷ L. Knappert, sharing this feeling, complained that modernists were “sick and tired” of liberal leaders such as Samuel van Houten (1837-1930) who ridiculed and thwarted their aspiration to Christianise society.⁵⁸

In the early twentieth century, when the subcultures of Roman Catholics and neo-Calvinists became ever more institutionalised, modernists continued to wag their fingers at liberals. Notwithstanding his liberal political conviction, B.D. Eerdmans characterised “the indifference of those who call themselves our supporters as liberals” in 1905 as the “biggest danger with which we as champions of modernist religious life have to struggle.” Those liberals who paid lip service to the modernist movement, but never actively participated in it, were “far more dangerous to us than a fierce attack from orthodox quarters.” They strengthened confessionalists in their belief that modern theology was the cause of waning interest in religious life.⁵⁹ Although he began by saying that modernists themselves were to blame for the impending victory of Catholicism and orthodox Calvinism, an anonymous modernist in fact blamed

56 H.Ph. de Kanter, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Repliek’, *De Hervorming* 1886-22 (29 May 1886), 87-88, here 87 [he is erroneously referred to as ‘H.Th. de Kanter’].

57 [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Politieke preeken’, *Ibid.* 1895-12 (23 March 1895), 46.

58 L. Knappert, ‘Het “Schoolblad” en het godsdienstonderwijs’, *Ibid.* 1898-25 (18 June 1898), 99.

59 [B.D. Eerdmans in:] ‘Berichten, enz. – De algemeene vergadering’, *Ibid.* 1905-44 (4 November 1905), 347-349, here 348.

political liberals for it at the end of a 1906 article in *Teekenen des Tijds* – after all, he concluded, if the latter had assisted modernists in their advancement of free religious life, Kuyper and his ultramontanist allies would never have been able to seize power.⁶⁰ At the fourth international conference of religious liberals, held in Boston in 1907, H.Y. Groenewegen made a similar argument. The Dutch were not, he stressed, as fond of clericalism and confessionism as the increasing social and political influence of Roman Catholics and neo-Calvinists might suggest, but because they were “religion-minded” and distrustful of currents conflicting with this religion-mindedness, many of them preferred a politics based on dogmatic rigidity to a liberalism that did not seem to care about religious affairs at all. Groenewegen further suggested that modernists, at the moment “as a hardly recognisable subsection of liberalism in general,” should not take this state of affairs lying down.⁶¹ H.T. de Graaf agreed. In a series of editorials in 1920, he lamented the fact that modernists had all too long been “dragged along by sceptical liberals.” Modernists were reaping the bitter fruits of the latter’s indifference. By disregarding religious motives as a relevant factor in politics, liberals had given confessionists the opportunity to monopolise religion in the political arena. Now that confessionists had managed to increase their social visibility and political influence, liberals only reckoned with Christianity in its orthodox form, overlooking modernists and treating them as a “negligible quantity.” De Graaf repeated what many modernists had argued before him and what opinion leaders such as G.J. Heering would argue after him: thinking that religion does not play any role in politics and society is a delusion.⁶²

4 Modernist Group Formation within Political Liberalism

Modernist dissatisfaction with political liberalism was not limited to the utterance of jeremiads. Those modernists who not only accused liberal leaders of being disinterested in religion, but who went one step further in their criticism

60 Een vrijzinnige, ‘Aan wie de schuld, zoo Rome en Dordt spoedig weer zegevieren? Ernstig woord ter overdenking voor de “verlichte” liberale landgenooten’, *Teekenen des Tijds* VIII (1906), 67–83. The article was also issued as a separate brochure.

61 [H.Y. Groenewegen in:] ‘Berichten, enz. – Buitenland’, *De Hervorming* 1907–44 (2 November 1907), 349–350, here 350.

62 H.T. de Graaf, ‘Godsdienst en maatschappij – Tegen wie?’, *Ibid.* 1920–25 (26 June 1920), 98. See also: H.T. de Graaf, ‘Godsdienst en maatschappij – Als men niet loslaat. . .’, *Ibid.* 1920–27 (10 July 1927), 106–107, here 106; H.T. de Graaf, ‘Godsdienst en maatschappij – Van de fusieplannen’, *Ibid.* 1920–49 (11 December 1920), 194; G.J. Heering, ‘Sociale en a-sociale religie’, *Ibid.* 1926–43 (23 October 1926), 340–341, here 340.

by arguing that modernist principles could not be done full justice within the existing liberal framework, felt that modernists with liberal leanings should strengthen their bonds. As early as 1876, H.Ph. de Kanter hinted at the need for a separation of modernist liberals from other political liberals if the latter continued to neglect the importance of religion for national life. Taking Samuel van Houten as the pre-eminent example of the irreligious liberal, and borrowing the adage 'in isolation lies our strength' from the founding father of anti-revolutionary politics, Guillaume Groen van Prinsterer (1801-1876), De Kanter argued that modernists should in that case take the latter's motto to heart rather than staying loyal to the former.⁶³ In the build-up to the establishment of the Liberal Union in 1885, F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr. straightforwardly asked if modernists should stand aloof from this initiative and found a separate *Protestantenbondspartij* (NPB party), dedicated to the free development of religious life in politics and society while rejecting clericalism. Fearing that such a party would foster complacency and alienate liberals who contributed to the cause after which the modernist movement aspired without being aware of it themselves, Hugenholtz gave a negative answer to his own question.⁶⁴ Fellow dissatisfied liberal modernists apparently agreed with him that their place was *within* the Liberal Union (and its conservative and progressive offshoots), as none of them made any attempt to found a party of their own.

Nonetheless, the issue came to be discussed again in 1906. Commenting on a lecture L. Knappert had given on religious and political liberalism in The Hague, an editor of the liberal *Nieuwe Courant* (*New Newspaper*) interpreted the lecture as a plea for party formation on a modernist basis. Knappert, he paraphrased, had noted with regret that manifestations of religious belief were more and more removed from public life, and had even echoed Kuyper by urging modernists to show "that their religion is sovereign, having control over every segment of life – including political life." Knappert might have *said* that he rejected the way in which Roman Catholics and orthodox Protestants mixed faith and politics, but had actually suggested his fellow modernists follow the example of confessionalist politics. After all, "how can the state 'advance' religion," the editor asked Knappert rhetorically, "without giving preferential treatment to [certain] denominations and without choosing between religious currents?"⁶⁵ In response, Knappert explained that a separate political

63 [H.Ph. de Kanter in:] 'Protestantendag', *De Hervorming* 1876-49 (7 December 1876), 2-4, here 3.

64 [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'Binnenland – Onze verhouding tot de liberale Unie', *Ibid.* 1885-03 (17 January 1885), 11; 1885-04 (24 January 1885), 14-15, here 14.

65 Quoted in: 'De vrijzinnig-godsdiensstige partij', *De Tijd* 1906-17758 (23 January 1906), 5-6, here 6.

party of modernist liberals was not what he envisioned, but he failed to make clear how modernist liberals should give expression to their religious views and interests – which, from a modernist perspective, were considered to be the same as the ‘public interest’ – within the political domain.⁶⁶

A modernist liberal *party* would never come into being.⁶⁷ The fear that such a party could only exist as a kind of modernist ‘ARP’ was responsible for this. However, modernists did take several initiatives to make the modernist element in liberalism more visible and hence more influential. For example, K. Vos, a Mennonite minister and parliamentary candidate for the League of Free Liberals, launched a personal election campaign in 1918 in which he specifically targeted modernist voters. His manifesto, set forth during an electoral meeting in Amsterdam, undeniably shows this. As a free liberal, Vos explained that he was extremely wary of government interference in social life. He nonetheless contended that the state should not be unconcerned about the place of religion in society, for morality, he argued, is inextricably connected with piety. A spirit of “sincerity in life, good faith, and justice” should therefore be “preserved.” As the confessionalist parties demonstrated with their calls for the death penalty, the abolishment of compulsory vaccination, the holding of Catholic processions on public roads, civil recognition of Catholic church weddings, and censorship of theatre plays, Roman Catholic and Protestant orthodoxy did not foster such a spirit. A blossoming of modernist religiosity in society, Vos stressed, was therefore in the interest of the state itself. Another indication of his focus on modernist voters is the fact that Vos pleaded for the abolishment of Ascension Day as a public holiday, “for half of the popu-

66 [L. Knappert in: J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Berichten, enz. – Vrijzinnig-godsdiensigen en “liberalen”’, *De Hervorming* 1906-05 (3 February 1906), 36.

67 Still in 1923, in the circle of the recently founded *Vereeniging tot verbreiding der vrije religie* (Association for the Spread of Free Religion), the initiative was taken to establish a party called ‘*Vrij-Religieuze Staatspartij*’ (‘Free Religious State Party’). Several ministers, mostly belonging to the extreme left wing of the modernist movement, among them H.G. van Wijngaarden, were involved with this association. It could more or less be seen as a continuation of the failed Free Religious Federation, referred to in chapter 5. See: ‘Kerknieuws – Vereeniging tot verbreiding der vrije religie’, *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* LXXX.82 (24 March 1923), evening paper D, 2; ‘Een nieuwe staatspartij’, *Ibid.* LXXX.131 (13 May 1923), morning paper D, 1. The initiative to found the *Vrij-Religieuze Staatspartij*, intended to counteract both the ‘sectarianism’ of the confessionalist parties and the religious indifference in liberal and socialist parties, received hardly any attention in the modernist press. S.H.N. Gorter did make mention of it in *De Stroom*; he felt that its aims were too general and that it failed to make clear how it wanted to realise these aims. See: [S.H.N. Gorter], ‘In den stroom – Vrij-Religieuze Staatspartij?’, *De Stroom* 11.24 (26 May 1923), 2. The initiative foundered before it even began; an announced constituent assembly was never held.

lation does not believe in it.”⁶⁸ Moreover, several liberal Reformed ministers issued a circular in which they declared their support for Vos's candidature and urged their modernist *confrères* to do the same. Vos, they stated, did wish to preserve existing ecclesial privileges, such as state salaries for ministers, and hence served their interests.⁶⁹

A personal political initiative such as Vos's was a sensitive matter in the modernist movement: the Dutch Reformed minister W.R. Diephuis (1887-1971) voiced the general feeling among modernists when he stated that voting for someone *primarily* because of shared religious ideas instead of shared political principles smacked too much of confessionalist politics.⁷⁰ But modernist initiatives to influence liberal politics were not restricted to attempts to get individual modernists elected to parliament. Starting in the mid-1910s, three initiatives were made that at least implicitly intended to make modernists more influential in liberal political parties. True, two of these, the founding of the *Godsdienstig-Democratische Kring* (Religious Democratic Circle) within the Liberal Democratic League in 1914, and the creation of the *Genootschap voor Zedelijke Volkspolitiek* (Society for Ethical National Politics) in 1922, were not exclusively modernist affairs. Yet, their founders and leaders were modernists. The Society for Ethical National Politics was moreover not an exclusively liberal affair. It is, nonetheless, justified to deal with it here, since its sphere of action *included* liberalism and, judging by what Roessingh, one of the society's leaders, noted in 1925, most modernists were politically still oriented towards liberalism.

The oldest of those initiatives, the Religious Democratic Circle, operated within liberal democratic circles. The driving spirit behind it was Ph.A. Kohnstamm, an educationalist with a secular Jewish background who joined the Dutch Reformed Church in 1917. As both chairman, from 1907 until 1918, and party ideologist of the VDB, Kohnstamm was a central figure in the Liberal Democratic League. His position within the VDB can be compared to the one Banning would have within the SDAP from the 1930s onwards. The kinship with Banning went even further: Kohnstamm too sought too to base his party on a philosophy of life in which liberal Protestant principles were firmly embedded. Like Banning, he considered the individual personality to be at the centre of Christian ethics. The individual personality, he argued, could only be

68 Quoted in: “De Vrij-Liberalen tegenover het geestelijke leven des volks”, *Algemeen Handelsblad* XC1.29114 (9 April 1918), morning paper, 7.

69 W.R. Diephuis, ‘Ingezonden – Op den verkeerden weg’, *De Hervorming* 1918-24 (15 June 1918), 95-96.

70 *Ibid.*

done full justice to in a political democracy, a political arena to which every adult has access, and in a social democracy, by which he meant a society in which no one would have to be preoccupied with earning his daily bread. Government policy should be aimed at enabling the individual personality to realise its full potential. Contrary to the social ethics that had dominated liberalism thus far, Kohnstamm did not mean that people should be helped to become decent citizens, but rather that people should be given the opportunity to pursue the (modernist) ideal of becoming a 'spiritual aristocrat'. By founding the Religious Democratic Circle, Kohnstamm tried to get the VDB to "unconditionally recognise religion as the deepest manifestation of human life and the highest value in life," doing this not only out of dissatisfaction with the perceived spirit of religious indifference in liberal politics, but – and this is crucial – also in reaction to confessionalsists' monopolisation of religion as a motive for political engagement and as an all-pervasive force in social life.⁷¹

Although the Religious Democratic Circle ceased its activities after 1919, Kohnstamm's efforts eventually had some success. In 1920, he managed to have a sentence included in the VDB's new political programme in which "the high value of religion for national life is acknowledged." His close ally D. van Embden (1875-1962), who had been a religious Jew before becoming a member of the Remonstrant Brotherhood, secured agreement in 1923 that party congresses held on Sundays would begin with a 'devotional' ceremony. Moreover, with liberal Protestantism being more explicitly appreciated, the VDB secured the ongoing sympathy of several modernist opinion leaders.⁷² Kohnstamm and his supporters propagated their views in *De Schakel* (*The Link*), issued as the official journal of the Religious Democratic Circle from 1916 until 1919, and in a series of brochures called '*Synthese*' ('*Synthesis*'), which started in 1914 and was incorporated into the monthly political and cultural magazine *Onze Eeuw* (*Our Century*) in 1922.⁷³ As the name '*Synthese*' indicates, they tried to relate Christianity and politics, not, as confessionalsists did, in terms of an antithesis between theology-based and secular politics, but by developing a political theory "that connects a strong reform agenda with interest in, and concern for, the big spiritual questions preoccupying our nation."⁷⁴ For them, the only dividing

71 'Inleiding', *De Schakel* 1 (1916), 1-3, here 1. See also: Ph.A. Kohnstamm, *Godsdienst en politiek. Een studie over politieke partijvorming* (Haarlem 1915); Te Velde, *Gemeenschapszin en plichtsbeseft*, 198-202; M.H. Klijnsma, *Om de democratie. De geschiedenis van de Vrijzinnig-Democratische Bond, 1901-1946* (Amsterdam 2008), 348-350.

72 Klijnsma, *Om de democratie*, 703.

73 This magazine ceased to exist in 1924.

74 'Inleiding', *De Schakel* 1 (1916), 1-3, here 3.

line in politics that really mattered was that between a willingness and an unwillingness to promote democracy in the political and social senses explained above.

After the demise of the Religious Democratic Circle, the Society for Ethical National Politics came to shelter many who had been involved with Kohnstamm's creation. Both Kohnstamm himself and Van Embden were among its founding members,⁷⁵ as were Roessingh and De Graaf, who had written brochures as part of the *Synthese* series. Together with Heering, Roessingh and De Graaf were the moving forces behind the Society for Ethical National Politics. Being thus dominated by modernists, the society tried to enhance the "moral character of politics," to stress the ethical character of political issues, and to "eliminate many cultured individuals' aversion to participation in political life."⁷⁶ This last intention should be read against the background of the legal establishment of general enfranchisement and compulsory voting at the end of the 1910s. As Van Embden argued, using modernist discourse in a 1922 brochure, political life could only be put on a higher level if the spiritually most developed Dutchmen and Dutchwomen acted on their moral duty to set a good example. The moral level of political parties, he argued, depended on the people who populated them. By not taking part in party politics, the spiritually most developed should consequently be held responsible for the parties' failure to totally eradicate social wrongs.⁷⁷ In circles of intellectuals, artists, and students, there was a good deal of repugnance towards contemporary political life, either because parliamentary mass democracy gave political power to people who were deemed intellectually incapable of making conscious political decisions, led to dishonest practices, shifted the focus in national life from culture to politics, and thwarted anarchist ambitions, or because it conflicted with the ideal of direct democracy.⁷⁸ To dramatize their complaints, some intellectuals even tried to get vagabonds and buffoons elected with ridiculous election promises – leading to the emergence of 'scum' parties in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and Haarlem – and were among the first to embrace fascism.⁷⁹

75 J.Th.M. Bank, *Opkomst en ondergang van de Nederlandse Volksbeweging (NVB)* (Deventer 1978), 128.

76 'Statuten van het Genootschap voor Zedelijke Volkspolitiek', appendix to *Het Gemeenebest* 1.1 (January 1923), 1–2. See also: G.J. Heering, *Wat wil het Genootschap voor Zedelijke Volkspolitiek?* (Leiden 1922).

77 J. van Embden, *De ontwikkelden en de politiek* (Leiden 1922).

78 L.M.H. Joosten, *Katholieken en fascisme in Nederland, 1920–1940* (Utrecht [1964] 1982), 164.

79 C.D.J. Brandt et al. (eds.), *Onderdrukking en verzet. Nederland in oorlogstijd 1* (Arnhem 1950), 103; K.P.S.S. Vossen, *Vrij vissen in het Vondelpark. Kleine politieke partijen in Nederland 1918–1940* (Amsterdam 2003), 142–144; R. te Slaa and E. Klijn, *Ontstaan en opkomst van de Nationaal-Socialistische Beweging, 1931–1935* (Amsterdam 2009), 81–84.

Although not challenging the system of mass democracy as such – on the contrary, its founders were convinced democrats –, the Society for Ethical National Politics was also concerned about the negative side effects mass democracy had on political culture. It therefore emphasised that politics should be *ethical*, which meant that politicians ought to abstain from populist rhetoric and underhanded doings, and ought to base their political actions on firm principles, and also that politics should be in the *public* interest, not in the interest of one class (as was politics based on the theory of the class struggle) or Christian orthodoxy (as was politics based on the theory of the antithesis). In line with this, the official magazine of the society was tellingly titled '*Het Gemeenebest*' (*The Common Good*).

The Society for Ethical National Politics wanted to facilitate discussions between people with different political preferences in order to find "a shared ethical core in the manifestos of all political parties" and hence increase the willingness among representatives of those parties to collaboratively enact what the present day demanded.⁸⁰ It ultimately aimed, as De Graaf put it, at bringing about "a purer, may I be allowed to say, a more sacred sphere of political life than the one to which we have gotten used."⁸¹ It did not want to function as a political party, but hoped that its activities would permeate existing parties with a spirit based on justice and Christianity.⁸² These two terms were not specified and thus remained rather vague, as did all of the statements members of the society made to characterise their aim. This vagueness will have undoubtedly contributed to the limited support that the society received. *Het Gemeenebest* was last issued in 1927 and a final congress, at which the society was abolished, took place a year later.⁸³

Although their rejection of the antithesis and the class struggle would have made an orientation towards liberalism rather obvious, the members of the society were just as disappointed with liberal political parties as they were with confessionalist and socialist ones.⁸⁴ As De Graaf had already stated in 1919 by

80 H.T. de Graaf, 'Godsdienst en maatschappij – Het Genootschap voor Zedelijke Volkspolitiek', *De Hervorming* 1922-06 (11 February 1922), 44-45, here 45.

81 Quoted in: G.J. Heering, 'Levensbericht van Prof. Dr. H.T. de Graaf', *Handelingen van de Maatschappij der Nederlandsche Letterkunde te Leiden en levensberichten harer afgestorven medeleden, 1930-1931* II (Leiden 1931), 6-13, here 7.

82 Heering, *Wat wil het Genootschap voor Zedelijke Volkspolitiek?*, 5-6.

83 'Genootschap voor Zedelijke Volkspolitiek', *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* LXXV.190 (10 July 1928), morning paper C, 1. Looking back upon the Society for Ethical National Politics in 1932, Heering thought that the society had gone down because its scope of aims had been too ambitious. See: Exalto, "Dit Koninkrijk tartende oorlogsbedrijf", 27.

84 E.g.: A.A. van Rhijn, *Christendom en politiek* (Leiden 1924), 25-26.

paraphrasing an anonymous acquaintance, whose opinion he believed to be shared by many modernists, liberal political parties still thought that the separation of church and state required religion to be absent from political life, and lacked the idealistic belief in a more humane society. The efforts Kohnstamm was making at the time to integrate liberal Protestant principles into the politics of the VDB failed to convince De Graaf's acquaintance to change his opinion of political liberalism. Because of such sentiments, which De Graaf and his sympathisers did not conceal, combined with its pleas for (unilateral) disarmament and more autonomy for the Dutch East Indies,⁸⁵ the Society for Ethical National Politics gave the impression that it leaned towards the far left of the political spectrum.⁸⁶ The Remonstrant E.C. van Dorp (1872-1945), the first female economist in the Netherlands and at the time the only parliamentarian of the conservative *Liberaal Partij* (Liberal Party), accused the society of not sticking to its own rule to abstain from party politics. By rejecting the *Vlootwet* (Fleet Law), intended to strengthen the Dutch navy, and supporting the *Arbeidsgeschillenwet* (Law on Labour Differences), which introduced the principle of arbitration in economic life and hence conflicted with the Liberal Party's economic principle of *laissez-faire*, the society, Van Dorp implied, sided with socialist parties.⁸⁷ She mentioned this in relation to what she perceived as a Marxist turn in Dutch modernism.⁸⁸

Van Dorp belonged to a group of modernists with mostly conservative-liberal political ideas who felt that liberals like her were shouted down by socialists and antimilitarists in both the liberal Protestant press and in liberal Protestant congregations. F.C.M. Boenders, the unofficial leader of this group, did not blame his socialist and antimilitarist co-religionists for championing their political creed. Rather, he regretted that those who did not believe in "the dogma of maximised state interventionism" remained silent. Because socialist modernists spoke themselves out so loudly, conservative political liberals such as Boenders had the impression of being looked down upon in modernist

85 *Het vraagstuk van nationale ontwapening. Rapport van de gemengde commissie ter bestudeering van het ontwapeningsvraagstuk uit het Genootschap voor Zedelijke Volkspolitiek en de Vereeniging voor Volkenbond en Vrede* (Leiden 1924); C. van Vollenhoven, *Indië gisteren en heden* (Leiden 1922).

86 Until well into the twentieth century, the term 'left' in a political context did not, as it does today, refer to parties that favour progressive socio-economical and ethical politics, but to *all* non-confessionalist parties – liberal, socialist, and communist alike.

87 E.C. van Dorp, 'Godsdienst en maatschappij – De kerk en de sociale vraagstukken', *De Hervorming* 1924-09 (1 March 1924), 67-70, here 70.

88 E.C. van Dorp, 'Godsdienst en maatschappij – De kerk en de sociale vraagstukken', *Ibid.* 1924-03 (19 January 1924), 19-21, here 21.

circles. In liberal parties, they did not feel completely at home either, focused as these parties were on material issues. Boenders therefore urged all modernists who felt the same as he did to join forces – not with the intention of forming a more conservative equivalent of the Society for Ethical National Politics, but to increase their visibility in both the modernist movement and the liberal parties.⁸⁹ In early 1925, the editor of *De Hervorming*, where Boenders had recently made his appeal, received many letters of both approval and disapproval about the idea of establishing an association of conservative liberal modernists. The future fascist G.H. van Senden, for example, said Boenders's feeling of uneasiness with the perceived dominance of socialist opinions in the modernist press was justified, but blamed him for his own lack of social reform-mindedness. The socialist Joh.E. Post (1880-1945) cynically characterised conservative-liberal modernists as “Christians putting on the brake,” who cherished the ideal of solidarity and social harmony while holding back from attempts to realise them, but also welcomed Boenders's initiative as a way of bringing out more clearly which modernists championed and which modernists rejected structural social reform.⁹⁰

Liberal ‘heavyweight’ J. de Louter, on the other hand, applauded Boenders for venting what he himself had already felt for years. The rise of right-wing modernism and the growing response socialism was finding in modernist circles, two processes which he considered to be related, had damaged the modernist movement rationally and ethically. Socialist modernists made the same mistake as confessionalists by applying Christianity's ethical appeal to the individual to society as a whole. De Louter therefore fully supported Boenders's call, in hopes of putting the modernist movement back on the right – liberal – track.⁹¹ The Mennonite minister P. Feenstra, Jr., F.H. Pyttersen (1869-1952), who was a member of the liberal Dutch Reformed congregation in Sneek, and L. van Wijngaarden (1872-1952), who belonged to the NPB branch in Amersfoort, stressed that modernist liberals should first and foremost try to exert more influence *within* the existing liberal parties.⁹² De Louter, however,

89 F.C.M. Boenders, ‘Godsdienst en maatschappij – Vereeniging van godsdienstige vrijzinnigen’, *De Hervorming* 1924-52 (27 December 1924), 413-414, here 413. See also: F.C.M. Boenders, ‘Vereeniging van godsdienstige vrijzinnigen’, *Ibid.* 1925-07 (14 February 1925), 52; F.C.M. Boenders, ‘Vrijzinnig-godsdienstige liberalen’, *Ibid.* 1925-15 (11 April 1925), 114; Van Driel, *Dienaar van twee heren*, 485-489.

90 J.E. Post, ‘Het voorstel-Boenders’, *De Hervorming* 1925-02 (10 January 1925), 13.

91 J. de Louter, ‘Antwoord aan mr. F.C.M. Boenders’, *Ibid.* 1925-02 (10 January 1925), 12.

92 P. Feenstra, Jr., ‘Ingezonden’, *Ibid.* 1925-03 (17 January 1925), 21; [F.H. Pyttersen and L. van Wijngaarden in:] ‘Ingezonden – De oproep van ds.mr. Boenders’, *Ibid.* 1925-03 (17 January 1925), 21-22.

maintained that a separate organisation of modernist liberals was needed to prevent the organised modernist movement, as configured by the NPB, from disintegrating along lines of political differences. Though not using the word 'socialism' as such, he implied that socialist-minded modernists made improper use of the NPB to propagate their political views and were trying to make the modernist movement subservient to their political cause. This led to tensions with modernists who did not share these political views. The NPB, *De Louter* emphasised, was an association with a *religious* task and was intended to bring together people who shared the religious ideal of free piety. Socialist modernists should therefore only put forward their *political* views in organisations with a political objective, such as the Religious Socialist League and *De Blijde Wereld*. Of course, *De Louter* admitted, the same applied to liberal modernists, including himself. If they wanted to express their political views, they, too, should do so in a separate organisation.⁹³ The meeting during which *De Louter* made his case, which was supposed to lead to the establishment of a group of modernist liberals and was held directly after the annual meeting of modern theologians on 22 April 1925, did not have the result *De Louter* and Boenders had hoped for. The number of attendants was low, whereas the dissension among modernist liberals on the questions of whether a separate organisation was needed and what such an association should do was too big for anything concrete to come out of the matter.⁹⁴

Yet, in late 1930, some liberal modernists issued a circular in which they called on their politically like-minded co-religionists to finally close ranks.⁹⁵ B.D. Eerdman was the driving force behind this new attempt. In 1925, he had doubted whether liberal modernists needed a separate organisation to uphold their religion-based political beliefs, probably because he felt that his *Vrijheidsbond* already offered liberal modernists the opportunity to do so.⁹⁶ Afterwards, however, he had come to see that his scepticism was wrong. Without coordinated action, it had proved to be impossible for political liberals to counterbalance the influence of the well-organised socialist current within the modernist

93 J. de Louter, 'Toespraak tot een "groep van vrijzinnig-godsdienstige liberalen"', *De Hervorming* 1925-18 (1 May 1925), 141-142; 1925-19 (8 May 1925), 147-148.

94 F.C.M. Boenders, 'De groepeerings van vrijzinnig-godsdienstige liberalen', *Ibid.* 1925-19 (8 May 1925), 149-150.

95 Referred to in e.g.: 'Godsdienstige liberalen', *Leeuwarder Nieuwsblad* 1930-6734 (28 November 1930), 9.

96 This had also been the opinion of another modernist member of the *Vrijheidsbond*, the Dutch Reformed minister G. Hulsman. See: [B.D. Eerdman and G. Hulsman in: F.C.M. Boenders], 'De groepeerings van vrijzinnig-godsdienstige liberalen', *De Hervorming* 1925-19 (8 May 1925), 149-150, here 149.

movement. After the formation of a provisional committee, chaired by Eerdman, in March 1931, the *Vereeniging van Vrijzinnig-Godsdienstige Liberalen* (Association of Modernist Liberals) was formally established on 6 June 1931.⁹⁷ Its organ was the monthly opinion magazine *Onze Wachter* (*Our Guard*), issued between 27 January 1933 and 30 April 1940, after which the association fell silent for good. Although its editors repeatedly emphasised that it was their endeavour not to raise liberal voices against, but rather *alongside* socialist ones,⁹⁸ *Onze Wachter* was in fact filled with attacks against the claims made by socialist modernists. For example, the editor-in-chief and army officer M.P. Kokje (1894-1986) contradicted modernists who believed in the blessings of socialism by rhetorically asking them if the only country in which “the spirit of socialism is at least partially concretised,” Soviet Russia, was really as blissful as they hoped a socialist state would be.⁹⁹ F.C.M. Boenders, who joined the editorial board in January 1935, argued that the SDAP, the favourite of many modernist opinion leaders, was either a “radical bourgeois party,” committed to democratic principles, or a party pursuing the realisation of “the socialist Idea,” which was incompatible with democracy. He feared that the SDAP pretended to be the former, but secretly still pursued a “red dictatorship.”¹⁰⁰ Moreover, he was annoyed by socialists’, particularly red ministers’, insistence on being right all the time.¹⁰¹

Although their conservative liberal political views automatically drove them into the arms of the *Vrijheidsbond*, and although they did not hide their sympathies for this party, contributors to *Onze Wachter* were not entirely uncritical of liberal politics.¹⁰² Interpreting the electoral defeat that the *Vrijheids-*

97 An overview of the history of this association is given in: Van Driel, *Dienaar van twee heren*, 489-506.

98 M.P. Kokje, ‘Ter inleiding en motiveering’, *Onze Wachter* 1.1 (27 January 1933), 1-2; F.C.M. Boenders, ‘Vrijzinnig-godsdienstig liberaal of anti-socialist?’, *Ibid.* v.7 (28 July 1937), 4; [M.P. Kokje and F.C.M. Boenders], ‘Bij het 5-jarig bestaan van “Onze Wachter”’, *Ibid.* vi.1 (31 January 1938), 1; M.P. Kokje, ‘Oorsprong en doel onzer vereeniging en van ons blad’, *Ibid.* vii.3 (31 March 1939), 2.

99 M.P. Kokje, ‘Ordering en sociaal gevoel’, *Ibid.* v.8 (23 September 1937), 2-3, here 3.

100 F.C.M. Boenders, ‘Samenwerking met sociaal-democratie’, *Ibid.* iv.7 (31 July 1936), 3.

101 F.C.M. Boenders, ‘Socialistische orthodoxie’, *Ibid.* vi.6 (30 June 1938), 2.

102 Outsiders apparently got the impression that the Association of Religious Liberals intended to make propaganda for the *Vrijheidsbond*, based on the number of editorials in which any official tie between the association and the *Vrijheidsbond* was explicitly denied: [M.P. Kokje], ‘Nadere toelichting’, *Ibid.* 1.2 (24 February 1933), 1; ‘Verklaring omtrent onze verhouding tot de politieke partijen’, *Ibid.* 1.6 (23 Juny 1933), 6; M.P. Kokje, ‘Onze verhouding tot de politieke partijen’, *Ibid.* iv.7 (31 July 1936), 3; M.P. Kokje, ‘Het verval der liberale partij’, *Ibid.* v.6 (30 June 1937), 2-3, here 2; M.P. Kokje, ‘Oorsprong en doel onzer vereeniging en van ons blad’, *Ibid.* vii.3 (31 March 1939), 2.

bond suffered in 1937, Boenders explained that liberal parties lacked appeal because their representatives “usually hide their religious and social commitment.” An increased activity of modernist liberals was needed to get rid of this spirit of religious timidity.¹⁰³ H.D. Louwes (1893–1960), at the time a parliamentarian with a *Vrijheidsbond* mandate, likewise urged his fellow modernists to exert more influence on liberal parties. Only then could political liberalism “make up for its grave error, committed around 1900, of professing rationalism as though it were a dogma.” Liberal political parties needed liberal Protestantism to reinforce their position in political life, because the free development of religious life that liberal Protestantism tried to bring about “also safeguards [*orthodox* Protestants’] right and opportunity to be absolutely autonomous spiritually and to be treated with respect.” Louwes thus believed that an integration of liberal Protestant principles with liberal political theory would turn the liberal parties into a true alternative to confessionalist ones. As liberal Protestantism and political liberalism were both based on “the liberal worldview,” the latter was, in turn, the obvious instrument for liberal Protestants to use in trying to permeate political life with their *religious* principles.¹⁰⁴

In 1931, in the speech he gave at the inaugural meeting of the Association of Modernist Liberals, Eerdmans reminded his sympathisers that they not only had to counteract politics that were theoretically – as in the case of socialism – or practically – as in the case of liberal parties – based on a materialistic outlook on life, but also clericalist politics.¹⁰⁵ A year later, J.A. Eigeman (1876–1958), one of Eerdmans’s fellow modernist members of the *Vrijheidsbond*, stressed that no liberal could be satisfied with the “state clericalism,” the dominance of confessionalists at the legislative and executive political levels, that had managed to develop parallel to ecclesial clericalism. But, he added, it had been liberals’ own fault that such a ‘state clericalism’ could have come into being and gained preponderance in the first place. Roman Catholics and orthodox Protestants had risen in revolt against liberals’ lack of concern for religious life.¹⁰⁶ Sharing Eigeman’s vision, Louwes pointed in a 1934 article to one of the most disturbing results of this revolt: the emergence of denominational schools. At the expense of national unity and hence national vigour, liberals had helped

103 F.C.M. Boenders, ‘De nederlaag der liberalen’, *Onze Wachter* v.6 (30 June 1937), 3.

104 H.D. Louwes, ‘De vrijzinnige christenen en hun invloed op de politiek’, *Ibid.* v.11 (31 December 1937), 2.

105 Van Driel, *Dienaar van twee heren*, 491.

106 ‘Vereeniging van Vrijzinnig-Godsdienstige Liberalen’, *Het Vaderland* (27 September 1932), evening paper B, 2. See also: P.G.C. van Schie, *Vrijheidsstreven in verdrukking. Liberale partijpolitiek in Nederland 1901–1940* (Amsterdam 2005), 321–322.

to relieve public education of its task to foster 'Christian values' and had hence made public schools abhorrent to many Dutchmen and Dutchwomen.¹⁰⁷

5 Dissatisfaction with 'Neutrality' (1): Public Education

In the above-cited article, Louwes addressed an issue that modernists had been talking about since the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Although the ideal of the truly national public school, in which children from different backgrounds sat together in harmony, continued to be cherished in modernist circles, the volume and number of modernist voices expressing disappointment with public education increased every decade. In the modernist movement, it was perceived with regret that the 'neutral' base of public schools, which theoretically meant that no one's religious feelings should be offended by public education, more and more came to be interpreted as a total absence of religion.¹⁰⁸ From 1857 onwards, when a new law emphasised that it was out of the question that public schools would ever favour one religious creed over others, most orthodox Protestants had demanded that public schools should no longer be obliged, as they had been since 1806, to foster 'all civil and Christian virtues'.¹⁰⁹ After 1868, when the Dutch bishops, following the 1864 papal encyclical *Quanta Cura*, rejected state involvement in education, Roman Catholics began to make the same demand.¹¹⁰ Both groups believed, not unfoundedly, that the unspecified formulation to foster 'all civil and Christian virtues' was meant to instil children with the 'Christianity above religious differences' that they did not see as a good. Moreover, it deceived parents who wished to have their children educated in full accordance with the dogmas of their

107 H.D. Louwes, 'Wij vrijz.-godsd. liberalen tegenover enkele actueele vraagstukken op politiek en cultureel gebied', *Onze Wachter* 11.7 (8 August 1934), 3.

108 E.g.: Silvanus, 'Een gewichtig vraagstuk – ook voor de kerk?', *De Hervorming* 1876-30 (27 July 1876), 1-2; [M.E. van der Meulen in: H.A. van der Meulen], 'De jaarvergadering der Evangelische Maatschappij', *Ibid.* 1883-39 (29 September 1883), 154-155, here 154; x., 'Ingezonden stukken', *Ibid.* 1887-35 (27 August 1887), 139; V.D., 'Ingezonden stukken – De godsdienst en de openbare school', *Ibid.* 1901-09 (2 March 1901), 70; Batavus, 'Ingezonden stukken – Blijft er voor ons wel iets anders over dan het oprichten van eigen scholen?', *Ibid.* 1909-16 (17 April 1909), 126-127; H. Bakels, 'Ingezonden – Aan ds. Nijdam', *Ibid.* 1915-38 (18 September 1915), 337-338.

109 W.G.F. van Vliet, *Groen van Prinsterers historische benadering van de politiek* (Hilversum 2008), 226-234.

110 H.Th. Ambagtsheer, *Jhr. mr. Jeronimo de Bosch Kemper. Behoudend maatschappijhervormer* (Amsterdam 1959), 77; P.J. Oud (J. Bosmans ed.), *Staatkundige vormgeving in Nederland 1. 1840-1940* (Assen [1946] 1997), 95.

faith.¹¹¹ In the eyes of some modernists, liberal politicians' religious indifference caused 'the fostering of Christian virtues' to indeed become a hollow phrase.

While accusing liberal politicians of negatively interpreting the 'respect for every religious conviction' to which public schools were committed – that is, as an obligation for teachers to act as if religious life were non-existent –, modernists contended that the 'neutrality' of public education should be seen as a positive principle. Religious feelings should not be silenced, but should rather have the opportunity to be freely expressed, and should even be cultivated. Modernists wanted their children to receive education permeated with a religious spirit and felt that the law was on their side in this regard: in spite of confessionalist efforts to change this, public schools continued to be obliged to foster Christian values.¹¹² Modernists did not enter into details concerning this religious spirit, but of course, as they perfectly knew themselves, such a spirit could only be a modernist one – after all, liberal Protestantism did not tell people what to believe and was, at least in the eyes of the modernists themselves, tolerant towards orthodox conceptions of God. That Roman Catholics and orthodox Protestants would never be content with such a spirit was not taken into consideration: these groups had the constitutional right to found schools of their own. Modernists regretted that the ideal of one school for all the nation's children had become ever more unrealisable, but did not challenge freedom of education as such. However, the freedom to found denominational schools did not mean that the champions of such schools also had the right to demand that public education should be completely non-religious.

111 For a detailed account of the 'school struggle' from a neo-Calvinist perspective, see: P.A. Diepenhorst, *Onze strijd in de Staten-Generaal 1. De schoolstrijd* (Amsterdam 1927); D. Langedijk, *De schoolstrijd* ('s-Gravenhage 1935). For an overview from a Roman Catholic perspective, see: J. Aarts, *Schoolrecht, schoolstrijd, schoolwet in Nederland 1* and 11 (Tilburg 1931-1932).

112 E.g.: [I. Hooykaas in:] 'Protestantendag', *De Hervorming* 1876-49 (7 December 1876), 2-4, here 3; [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'Het nieuwe ministerie', *Ibid.* 1877-46 (17 November 1877), 1; [M.E. van der Meulen in: F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'Binnenland – Neutraal onderwijs', *Ibid.* 1882-02 (14 January 1882), 7; [G.C. Steynis in:] 'Nederlandsche Protestantenvbond – Winschoten', *Ibid.* 1883-06 (10 February 1883), 22; [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'Binnenland – Neutraliteit', *Ibid.* 1884-15 (12 April 1884), 61; J. Herderscheê, "'Neutrale" geschiedenis', *Ibid.* 1889-49 (7 December 1889), 195; J.W., 'Neutraal onderwijs', *Ibid.* 1890-25 (21 June 1890), 98; B.W. Colenbrander, *De volksschool en de godsdienst* (Hoorn 1899); M.v.B., 'De godsdienst en de lagere school', *De Hervorming* 1901-11 (16 March 1901), 82-83, here 82; K. Vos, *De openbare school* (Leiden 1905), 15-16; H. Hinse, 'Vrijzinnig christelijke scholen', *De Hervorming* 1909-26 (26 June 1909), 207-208, here 207; J. Bruining, 'Godsdienst en maatschappij – De openbare school', *Ibid.* 1922-03 (21 January 1922), 19-20, here 19.

To modernists' dismay, liberal politicians did not take a firm stand against this demand.¹¹³

Because of the perceived non-religious character of public education, the complaint that public schools one-sidedly focused on the acquisition of knowledge made itself heard in modernist circles. As explained in chapter 6, modernists attached great value to intellectual development, confident as they were that no truly *reasonable* individual would in due course adhere to orthodox conceptions of God, yet also felt that man's destiny to develop his *personality* to the full required character building and spiritual growth as well. Some modernists therefore charged that public schools grossly neglected the development of children's personality.¹¹⁴ And how, they asked, would it ever be possible for a public school to help children in developing their individuality, their moral sense and their sense of duty to devote their best efforts to the well-being of society, if its teaching staff were irreligious or at least did not explicitly evidence concern for religious life? Because in modernist ethics, spiritual growth was considered to depend in large part on personal contact with spiritually higher developed individuals, teachers ought to be 'spiritual aristocrats'. However, many of them were not, or were not allowed to be, since they were more or less obliged to be silent about anything related to religion at all.¹¹⁵ As a result, many public schools were not permeated with a religious spirit. They did offer opportunities for religious instruction, but only tucked away

113 P. Bruining, however, said modernists should not only blame liberal politicians for their lack of concern for religion in public education, but themselves as well; they should have exerted more pressure. See: P. Bruining, 'Ingezonden stukken', *De Hervorming* 1901-37 (14 September 1901), 294.

114 E.g.: B. Tideman Jz., 'Een levensteeken uit ons middelb. onderwijs', *Ibid.* 1895-37 (14 September 1895), 146; Censor [A. Carlier] and H. de Lang, 'De schoolkwestie', *Ibid.* 1901-10 (9 March 1901), 75-76; B.B., 'Leestafel – "Stemmen uit de Vrije Gemeente"', *Ibid.* 1902-21 (24 May 1902), 165; P.B. Westerdijk, 'Overlading', *Ibid.* 1903-04 (24 January 1903), 26-27; J.J. Bleeker, 'De tijden veranderen en met hen ook de mensen', *Ibid.* 1910-03 (15 January 1910), 18-19; [H. de Lang], 'Redactioneel – Klein maar veelbelovend', *Ibid.* 1915-02 (9 January 1915), 15; H.T. de Graaf, 'Hoofdartikel – De openbare school', *Ibid.* 1922-01 (7 January 1922), 1-3.

115 E.g.: [W.C. van Manen in: F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], "Voor school en godsdienst", *Ibid.* 1877-19 (12 May 1877), 1-2; 'Godsdienstige opvoeding', *Ibid.* 1880-38 (18 September 1880), 149-151, here 150; E. Snellen, 'Het wetsontwerp met zijn leelijke gebreken, maar zijn echt liberaal beginsel', *Ibid.* 1889-45 (9 November 1889), 180; Censor [A. Carlier in: J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Berichten, enz. – Uit den schoolstrijd', *Ibid.* 1901-35 (31 August 1901), 275-276; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Berichten, enz. – De samenkomsten te Groningen', *Ibid.* 1906-44 (3 November 1906), 348-349, here 348; H. Vrendenberg Cz., 'Twee stemmen over de onderwijsvraag', *Ibid.* 1916-41 (7 October 1916), 346-347; D. Drijver, 'Binnenland – Godsdienstige neutraliteit op de lagere school', *Ibid.* 1930-01 (4 January 1930), 2-3.

in weekly one-hour classes, isolated from the rest of the curriculum. Sunday schools, which modernists had adopted from the orthodox, could not overcome this lack of religious inspiration in public schools: ideally, they should merely have to further and conceptually deepen the religious spirit that public schools were supposed to instil in children. Moreover, Sunday schools did not reach as many children as did public schools.¹¹⁶ The remarkable surge in the number of articles in the early twentieth-century modernist press about new methods of teaching – methods in which teachers inspired admiration because of their highly developed personalities and stimulated their pupils to develop their own spiritual lives – should be seen against this background.¹¹⁷ Some modernists believed that these new methods of teaching might offer an alternative to the spiritually impoverished public education.

Other modernists felt that a more drastic step was needed. Would it not be best, they suggested, to follow Roman Catholics' and orthodox Protestants' example by founding denominational schools of their own? As early as 1887, an anonymous teacher working at a public school urged the NPB to found schools based on modernist principles. Modernists, he argued, should face the fact that the ideal of an undivided, truly national education system had ceased to exist. Moreover, 'respecting every religious conviction' meant in practice

116 E.g.: P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., 'Zegt het voort!', *De Hervorming* 1876-26 (29 June 1876), 1-2; J.H. Maronier, 'Scholen voor godsdienstonderwijs', *Ibid.* 1879-34 (23 August 1879), 134; J. Rinner, 'Tets over zondagsscholen', *Ibid.* 1881-36 (16 September 1881), 146; L. Knappert, 'Catechisatie-uren', *Ibid.* 1898-07 (12 February 1898), 25; P. Bruining, 'Ingezonden stukken', *Ibid.* 1899-12 (25 March 1899), 47; P. Bruining, 'Het godsdienstonderwijs en onze openbare scholen', *Ibid.* 1900-21 (26 May 1900), 155-156; C. van der Pol, 'De openbare school een onbestaanbaar compromis', *Ibid.* 1921-48 (3 December 1921), 377-379; H.U. Meyboom, *Ons godsdienstonderwijs* (Groningen 1877). In 1898 and 1919, modernist P. Bruining made a petition to Queen regent Emma (1858-1934) and Queen Wilhelmina (1880-1962) respectively in which he requested them to urge the government to improve the position of religious education in public schools. See: [P. Bruining in: J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Een adres aan Hare Majesteit de koningin-regentes', *De Hervorming* 1898-12 (19 March 1898), 46; 'Verscheidenheden en mededeelingen – Een adres aan de koningin', *Ibid.* 1919-18 (3 May 1919), 73.

117 E.g.: J.J. Meyer, 'Jan Ligthart's "Over opvoeding"', *Ibid.* 1908-04 (25 January 1908), 25-27; G.J. Heering, 'De godsdienst van Jan Ligthart', *Ibid.* 1916-13 (25 March 1916), 102-103; G.A. Hoevers, G.A., 'Leestafel – "Opvoeder en kind"', *Ibid.* 1916-30 (22 July 1916), 255-256; K.H.E. de Jong, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Dr. R. Steiner', *Ibid.* 1920-01 (10 January 1920), 1-2; R. Joosten-Chatzen, 'Godsdienst en maatschappij – Over Montessori-opvoeding', *Ibid.* 1920-36 (11 September 1920), 142-143; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Karakter der anthroposophie', *Ibid.* 1922-16 (22 April 1922), 122-124; H.T. de Graaf, 'Godsdienst en maatschappij – Montessori's godsdienstige opvoeding', *Ibid.* 1924-19 (10 May 1924), 146-147.

that a public school teacher had to conceal his inner life and hence an important element of his personality. As a result, a public school teacher was unable to inspire his pupils and only fostered indifference. While Roman Catholics and orthodox Protestants, by establishing denominational schools, were able to instil new generations with their religious principles and to breed the kind of characters they wanted, a fatal attachment to the illusion of 'neutral' public education made it impossible for modernists to do the same.¹¹⁸ This plea created a stir in *De Hervorming*. H. de Lang admitted that the current interpretation of 'neutrality' was unacceptable, but felt that the public school was an ideal too precious to give up. He feared that NPB-founded denominational schools would not contribute to a free development of religious life, but would drum specific modernist *conceptions* of God into children. Such schools would create little theologians, filled with the same sectarian intolerance that modernists condemned in confessionalists.¹¹⁹ Another (anonymous) letter writer protested against the allegation that public school teachers had to abstain from making any reference to their own principles of life. From personal experience, he claimed that it was indeed possible to pass a Christianity above religious differences on to children without giving offence to anyone.¹²⁰ Van Loenen Martinet stated that he had received many more reactions, all of which rejected the idea of founding modernist schools.¹²¹

However, since the perceived indifference of liberal politicians towards upholding the fostering of Christian values in public education proved persistent, the number of Roman Catholic and orthodox Protestant schools continued to increase, and the rise of malcontentism and right-wing modernism challenged existing modernist beliefs and practices, the idea came to be discussed again in the 1900s. This time, it met with more sympathy, particularly, though not exclusively, among right-wing modernists. The reason for this is that these modernists had a more exclusive interpretation of Christianity, and were more Bible-oriented than old-school modernists. Some of them felt that this should have consequences for education. In early 1901, a certain 'V.D.' called upon his fellow modernists to follow the example of orthodox Protestants. Just like the anonymous article writer had written fourteen years before him, he argued that it was only possible not to hurt any religious feelings if a teacher did not make any reference to religion at all. But no modernist could truly be satis-

118 x., 'Neutraliteit', *De Hervorming* 1887-31 (30 July 1887), 121-122.

119 H. de Lang, 'Binnenland – Moderne sektescholen', *Ibid.* 1887-32 (6 August 1887), 126-127.

120 E., 'Ingezonden stukken', *Ibid.* 1887-32 (6 August 1887), 127-128.

121 [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Ingezonden stukken – Protesten', *Ibid.* 1887-33 (13 August 1887), 131-132, here 131.

fied with this.¹²² Someone who signed herself 'M.v.B.' echoed De Lang by responding that modernist schools would only advance sectarianism.¹²³ Two anonymous teachers gave another reason why modernists should not turn away from public schools: it would provide an extra argument that confessionalists would use to stir people up against public education.¹²⁴ Yet, although the majority of modernists shared these concerns, there was also a general feeling among them that the fostering of Christian values should no longer remain a dead letter in the public schools. In the 1901 article referred to above, M.v.B. said that aspiring teachers did not have time to be closely involved in religious life because their curriculum was overloaded. As a result, they simply did not know how to foster Christian values.¹²⁵ To do something about this, the modernist-minded *Haagsch Genootschap ter verdediging van de christelijke godsdienst* (Society for the Defence of the Christian Religion in The Hague) established a college of education in 1910. Contrary to other colleges, this one paid specific attention to the religious development of its students in order to prepare them for permeating the public schools in which they would come to work with a religious spirit. The founding of separate modernist schools would thus no longer be necessary.¹²⁶

122 V.D., 'Ingezonden stukken – De godsdienst en de openbare school', *De Hervorming* 1901-09 (2 March 1901), 70.

123 M.v.B., 'De godsdienst en de lagere school', *Ibid.* 1901-11 (16 March 1901), 82-83, here 82. The article writer in question was probably the then treasurer of the national NPB Maria Catharina Berdenis van Berlekom (1860-1922), who also was an educator and often signed herself 'Marie van Berlekom'.

124 C.S. and H.d.S., 'Berichten, enz. – Van kerk en school ten platten lande', *Ibid.* 1901-48 (7 December 1901), 379-380, here 379.

125 M.v.B., 'De godsdienst en de lagere school', *Ibid.* 1901-11 (16 March 1901), 82-83, here 82.

126 At the 1906 meeting of modern theologians, the founding of modernist schools was discussed, but generally rejected. Instead, the result of the discussion was that more should be done to combat irreligiousness at public schools. At the NPB meeting held that same year, it was decided to explore the possibilities of founding a college of education on modernist principles. The *Haagsch Genootschap* picked up this idea in 1909, and put it into practice in 1910. See: J. Bruining, 'Kan de openbare lagere school bij de tegenwoordige regeling voldoen aan de eischen, die wij voor de zedelijk-godsdienstige vorming van ons volk daaraan mogen stellen?', appendix to *Ibid.* 1906-21 (26 May 1906), 13-18; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Berichten, enz. – De samenkomsten te Groningen', *Ibid.* 1906-44 (3 November 1906), 348-349; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Godsdienstonderwijs voor aanst. onderwijzers', *Ibid.* 1907-45 (9 November 1907), 354; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Berichten, enz. – De inwijding der kweekschool van het Haagsch Genootschap', *Ibid.* 1910-19 (7 May 1910), 148-149; H.J. Wilzen, 'Schets van 75 jaar onderwijs bij het Haagsch Genootschap', in: J.P. Heering et al., *Op de bres. 200 jaar Haagsch Genootschap tot verdediging van de christelijke godsdienst (1785-1985)* (Zoetermeer 1985), 71-108, here 71-73.

Instead of challenging the current interpretation of 'neutrality', a minority of modernists argued that this term indeed required the absence of religious expressions and that modernists who thought differently deluded themselves. In their eyes, attempts to permeate public education with a religious (modernist) spirit would never succeed, as they conflicted with the law. This was what the Dutch Reformed minister J.N. Pattist (1876-1946) emphasised in a 1910 brochure. Using typically modernist discourse, he contended that cognitive, religious, and ethical development forms an inextricable triad. 'Neutral' schools were compelled to only concern themselves with the first component of this triad and hence were unfit for giving children a modernist upbringing. If modernist parents really considered their spiritual life to be a treasure that they wanted to share with their children, they should build schools that made this possible.¹²⁷

Right-wing modernist J.J. Bleeker agreed with Pattist: whether modernists liked it or not, 'neutral' had come to mean 'irreligious'. He regretted that the earliest modernists, prejudiced as they had been against everything smacking of confessionism, had not supported Groen van Prinsterer in his plea for '*openbare gezindtescholen*' ('public denominational schools'). The rationale behind this plea was that a public school did not have to be acceptable to all, but, depending on its location, should have a religious basis in accordance with the denominational composition of the local population. This meant that public schools should have a Roman Catholic character in rural North Brabant, Limburg and eastern Overijssel, and a Protestant orientation in the countryside elsewhere in the Netherlands. In municipalities with a religiously mixed population, the government should establish separate Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish schools.¹²⁸ Instead, a division into religious and non-religious schools had arisen. Modernists, Bleeker urged, should finally accept that. By law, their religious principles could not be applied in public schools. Moreover, public school teachers were appointed by members of municipal councils, who "do not care about religious things. [...] They do not, and are not allowed to, ask whether [a candidate] is religious or irreligious, whether his moral sense is rooted in a belief in God or founded on a utilitarian philosophy of life."¹²⁹ At the 1910 NPB meeting, the public

127 J.N. Pattist, *Openbaar onderwijs of niet? Van een vrijzinnig christelijk standpunt* (Baarn 1910).

128 D. Langedijk, *Groen van Prinsterer en de schoolkwestie* (The Hague 1947), 24.

129 J.J. Bleeker, "Openbaar onderwijs of niet?", *De Hervorming* 1910-17 (23 April 1910), 130-131, here 131. See also: J.J. Bleeker, 'De tijden veranderen en met hen ook de mensen', *Ibid.* 1910-03 (15 January 1910), 18-19.

school teacher R. van Yperen openly supported Pattist and Bleeker. If public education continued to be permeated with a materialistic instead of a religious spirit, he declared, then “modernists’ spiritual needs would necessitate the founding of modernist private schools.”¹³⁰ F.E. van Santen, who together with Bleeker belonged to the theologically most extreme right wing of the modernist movement, urged modernists eight years later to wait no longer: “I think that it is nearly hopeless to win adults over to religion. We therefore need to concentrate our efforts on the youth. We must, in any way whatsoever, make sure that the youth no longer grow up without any knowledge of the things stemming from the spirit of God. [...] Many bad things have been said in our circles about the so-called Christian schools – I would like to say many more bad things about the neutral, meaning irreligious schools.”¹³¹

Although H.T. de Graaf could still write in late 1921 that “voices can be heard in support of liberal religious schools,” such schools did not get off the ground;¹³² that is to say, modernist *primary* schools, on which the discussion about education had concentrated so far. In 1929, a modernist *secondary* school, the *Vrijzinnig-Christelijk Lyceum* (Liberal Christian Grammar School) opened its doors in The Hague, followed by a second one in 1944.¹³³ According to J.A.J. Jousma (1907-?), the headmaster of the first *Vrijzinnig-Christelijk Lyceum* between 1950 and 1964, attempts were made to establish modernist grammar schools in Amsterdam and Rotterdam as well, yet he does not substantiate this claim.¹³⁴ In any case, the fact that a modernist secondary school only came into being in The Hague undoubtedly had to do with local modernists’ high level of organisation. Since 1923, Remonstrants, members of the NPB, and Dutch Reformed, Lutheran and Mennonite modernists living in The Hague worked together in a federation, which was intended to prevent modernists from being completely sidelined by the far better organised Roman Catholic and orthodox Protestant communities.¹³⁵ To do

130 [R. van Yperen in:] ‘De Zwolsche samenkomst’, *De Hervorming* 1910-45 (5 November 1910), 354-357, here 356. See also: [R. van Yperen in:] *Handelingen NPB* 1910, 52-56, here 62.

131 F.E. van Santen, ‘Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – De kwijnende godsdienst’, *De Hervorming* 1918-22 (1 June 1918), 85-86, here 86.

132 H.T. de Graaf, ‘Godsdienst en maatschappij – De openbare school’, *Ibid.* 1921-46 (19 November 1921), 364-365.

133 F. Boersma, *Het Tweede vcl. De geschiedenis van een merkwaardige school* (The Hague 1999), 9, 21-22.

134 J.A.J. Jousma, ‘Het eerste v.c.l. 1929-1964’, in: W.M. van der Mast et al. (eds.), *Jaarboek Geschiedkundige Vereniging “Die Haghe” 1979* (The Hague s.a.), 15-78, here 18.

135 Boersma, *Het Tweede vcl.*, 22-23.

this, a majority in the federation deemed it necessary to found a grammar school on modernist principles. After all, as argued in a brochure issued in 1927, secondary schools engaged their pupils to an even greater extent than primary schools.¹³⁶ Adolescence, the brochure continued, is the time in a person's life when spiritual needs begin to make themselves felt and personality takes shape. 'Neutrality' could not satisfy these needs and could not contribute to the ripening of one's personality: "spiritual development is neglected too much if it is not explicitly included in the aim of the school." Moreover, since 1917, the year in which public and denominational education had become entirely equal according to the law, no one could still cherish the hope that children from different religious backgrounds would one day all attend the same schools. Whereas Roman Catholics and orthodox Protestants could profess their faith in the classroom, modernists' preference for public education forced them "to always concede to the irreligious and the anti-religious." A modernist grammar school, the brochure concluded, was therefore urgently needed.¹³⁷

Although they were represented in the federation, the boards of the local VVH and NPB branches were highly critical of the endeavour, and so was the Dutch Reformed minister G. Hulsman (1867-1958), who was none other than the founder of the federation. In *Het Vaderland*, he expressed a fear that only the well-to-do would profit from modernist grammar schools, as the enrolment fees in higher secondary education in general were high. In saying this, Hulsman showed that he was well aware of the higher-class image modernism had, and of the fact that a modernist grammar school would strengthen this image, diminishing the already minimal appeal the modernist movement had. Being politically liberal himself, Hulsman also suggested that socialist and antimilitarist modernists might misuse such a school to indoctrinate adolescents with their political views. A final, and most fundamental, reason for Hulsman to oppose the endeavour was the possibility the law offered to organise religious education within the framework of public schools. Modernists, he urged, should make more use of this possibility, as it gave them the opportunity to reach and to potentially influence tens of thousands of non-modernist

136 Jousma, 'Het eerste v.c.l.', 16. Jousma erroneously states that this brochure was issued in 1929.

137 Quoted in: 'Een vrijzinnig-christelijk lyceum', *Het Vaderland* (7 October 1927), evening paper A, 2. See also: 'Het Vrijzinnig-Christelijk Lyceum – Zal het er komen?', *Ibid.* (13 October 1927), evening paper A, 1; F. Kleyn, 'De achtergrond der gedachte aan een vrijz.-chr. lyceum', *Ibid.* (19 October 1927), evening paper B, 1.

children as well.¹³⁸ Particularly this last reason seems to have been decisive for the majority of Dutch modernists, so that they did not found denominational schools, either primary or secondary, of their own.¹³⁹ In any case, the establishment of the *Vrijzinnig-Christelijk Lyceum* in The Hague was not copied elsewhere.

6 Dissatisfaction with 'Neutrality' (II): Associations on a General Basis

Modernist dissatisfaction with the spirit of religious indifference in political liberalism and public education was part of a larger feeling of marginalisation among modernists, leading to a rethinking of their position in social life. As the Remonstrant minister F. Kleyn (1887-1970), who supported the endeavour to establish the *Vrijzinnig-Christelijk Lyceum*, explained in defence of this endeavour, the desire to found a modernist grammar school was just one manifestation of a larger trend in liberal Protestantism. The modernist movement, he pointed out, had once completely identified itself with political liberalism. At that time, both in liberal Protestantism and political liberalism, the notion of 'neutrality' had been a *Leitmotiv*, as a result of which modernists had not felt the need to establish voluntary associations exclusively based on their religious principles. Yet, the appreciation of 'neutrality' in liberal Protestantism and political liberalism had come to differ, due to the development the former had undergone. Compared to the formative years of the modernist movement, liberal Protestantism had lost a good deal of influence and numerical strength. However, it "has gained in spiritual depth and has become more aware of its value." The awareness had grown that liberal Protestantism was not simply a negation of orthodoxy, but had rather a 'unique character' – a term Kleyn

138 G. Hulsman, 'Het Vrijzinnig-Christelijk Lyceum', *Het Vaderland* (20 October 1927), evening paper B, 2; G. Hulsman, 'Het Vrijzinnig-Christelijk Lyceum', *Ibid.* (24 October 1927), evening paper B, 1; G. Hulsman, 'Het Vrijz. Christ. Lyceum', *Ibid.* (26 October 1927), evening paper B, 2. Minister F. Kleyn particularly blamed Hulsman for suggesting that the modernist grammar school was designed to propagate socialist views among youngsters. See: F. Kleyn, 'Het Vrijz. Christelijk Lyceum', *Ibid.* (22 October 1927), evening paper D, 2. Engineer B.M. Gratama (1861-1944) denounced Hulsman's critique, while Doe Hans shared Hulsman's political concerns. See: B.M. Gramata and D. Hans, 'Het Vrijzinnig-Christelijk Lyceum', *Ibid.* (25 October 1927), morning paper A, 1. The discussion on modernist schools briefly flared up in *De Stroom* afterwards.

139 K. Geertsma, 'Neutraliteitsproblemen bij ons onderwijs', *De Smidse* VII.1 (January 1932), 13-27, here 22-24.

did not define. Likewise, the awareness had grown that liberal Protestantism needed “creations, institutions, organs of its own” to give expression to this unique character. Moreover, “the situation outside of the modernist movement itself” – a phrase with which Kleyn alluded to the process of pillarisation – forced liberal Protestants to get more organised.¹⁴⁰ Implying that modernists could only avert further social marginalisation if they no longer tried to ignore or resist this process, he later argued that “it is at present indispensable to create organisations to exert influence and to re-establish a connection with culture [that is, social life, *TK*] in general.”¹⁴¹ In a late 1927 editorial in *Het Vaderland*, J.J. Meyer endorsed Kleyn’s analysis. A modernist could oppose the founding of a separate grammar school, he argued, but not the motivation behind this endeavour:

We do not want to create division. But we do want to propagate a conviction in society. [. . .] Our liberal Protestantism is rather unknown to this world. [. . .] But then we have to create opportunities through which the world can get to know us. We need to create organs through which we can express our voice. If we stay hidden in our church buildings, which people are often unable to find, hidden in our own little press [. . .], then there will certainly be no chance of our permeating the world with the good influence of our principles. If we are willing to give up our aloofness, then we will again be able to influence national life, on which we have woefully lost our grip.¹⁴²

Kleyn’s and Meyer’s rhetoric echoed that of contemporary Roman Catholics, orthodox Protestants, socialists, and basically every other group in the Netherlands pursuing a particular religious or political goal. In Dutch society in the 1920s and 1930s, it was all about ‘principles’ that needed to be upheld and

140 F. Kleyn, ‘De achtergrond der gedachte aan een vrijz.-chr. lyceum’, *Het Vaderland* (19 October 1927), evening paper B, 1. See also: W. Mackenzie, ‘Wat aan de orde is – De federatieve gedachte’, *Amsterdamsch Bijblad van De Stroom* VIII.10 (9 February 1929), 1; W. Mackenzie, ‘Wat aan de orde is – De V.P.R.O. te Amsterdam’, *Ibid.* VIII.19 (13 April 1929), 1; F. Kleyn, ‘Referaten van de vergadering van moderne theologen, Amsterdam 29 en 30 April 1930 – Onze houding ten opzichte van eigen middelbaar onderwijs’, *Bijblad van De Stroom* IX.22 (3 May 1930), 7–9.

141 Quoted in: ‘Het Vrijzinnig-Christelijk Lyceum te ’s-Gravenhage’, *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* LXXXV.261 (19 September 1928), evening paper B, 1.

142 J.J. Meyer, ‘Een vrijzinnig-christelijk lyceum’, *Het Vaderland* (27 December 1927), evening paper D, 2.

materialised by means of institutionalisation.¹⁴³ By fully exploiting the possibilities mass media and democracy offered them, Roman Catholics and neo-Calvinists had managed to turn their numerical strength into political power and social influence. In certain domains of social life, social democrats had followed them. As an alternative to the Roman Catholic, orthodox Protestant, and social democratic 'pillars' that had thus come into being, there were associations on a 'general', 'neutral' basis. But as Kleyn's and Meyer's statements indicate, modernists' unconditional sympathy for neutrality-minded liberalism, neutral education, and neutral associations in general had flagged. As modernists noted that they were being marginalised, and as right-wing modernism became more influential in liberal Protestant circles, a growing number of modernists came to feel that 'neutrality' did not do full justice to their 'principles'.

Before the 1910s, the tendency in Roman Catholic and Kuyprian circles to organise themselves separately in all spheres of life, resulting in the emergence of 'pillars', was sharply denounced in the modernist movement.¹⁴⁴ It conflicted with modernist ideals of national harmony and a free development of religious life. In line with this perception, the integration of social work, such as district nursing, within the framework of the NPB was ultimately rejected. The fear that the modernist movement would develop in a confessionalist direction was too big.¹⁴⁵ On the other hand, confessionalists' display of power, and particularly their willingness to make sacrifices for the creation and preserva-

143 As Van Mourik Broekman explained, 'principles' are essential in life, because they emerge out of life itself and give it a sense of direction. Their content can vary and is less important than the mentality they generate. See: M.C. van Broekman, 'Beginselverklaring van het vrijzinnig protestantisme', *De Smidse* vi.7/8 (July/August 1931), 193-205, here 197.

144 E.g.: B. Tideman Jz., 'Een mannelijk woord', *De Hervorming* 1880-33 (14 August 1880), 129; [N.J. Telders], 'Theorie en praktijk in de Roomsche-Katholieke Kerk', *Ibid.* 1896-13 (28 March 1896), 50; Censor [A. Carlier], 'De vroegere dagen beter', *Ibid.* 1896-15 (11 April 1896), 58-59; [N.J. Telders], 'Joviale mensen en joviale beginselen', *Ibid.* 1900-05 (3 February 1900), 36-37; [N.J. Telders], 'De vreugden van Satan', *Ibid.* 1905-02 (14 January 1905), 10-11; N.J. Telders, 'Teekenen', *Ibid.* 1907-36 (7 September 1907), 282-283; N.J. Telders, 'A kingdom for a cry!', *Ibid.* 1909-10 (6 March 1909), 74; L. Knappert, 'Tegen Rome's overmacht', *Teekenen des Tijds* xiv (1912), 403-424, here 412; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Berichten, enz. - Hooge neutraliteit', *De Hervorming* 1913-26 (28 June 1913), 205.

145 Yet not everyone agreed with the decision not to conduct social work under the banner of the national NPB. An anonymous member of the NPB branch in Zwolle, one of the branches that was involved with district nursing at the time, argued that activities aimed at moral uplift could never have a 'neutral' character. "Neutrality," the speaker concluded, "functions as a pneumatic pump: it pumps the spirit out of every institution." Quoted from: 'Nederlandsche Protestantenvbond - Afdeling Zwolle', *Ibid.* 1898-40 (1 October 1898), 160.

tion of an institutionalised subculture, filled modernists with respect and even some envy. As early as the 1880s, some modernists held up the tightly organised Anti-Revolutionary Party, the founding of the Free University in Amsterdam, and the establishing of *dolerende* congregations as examples to their co-religionists. They did not argue that modernists should adopt the Kuyperian urge for institutional isolation as such, but rather that the formation of neo-Calvinist institutions should remind modernists that 'religion' was not a domain separated from, and alongside, 'society'. The way in which confessionalists related religion and society – creating an antithesis along dogmatic lines – was wrong, but they were right to profess and to practise that a relationship between religion and society as such did indeed exist. Moreover, confessionalists managed to constantly find new methods to spread their principles, such as evangelisation by means of a widespread dissemination of sermons and open-air meetings.¹⁴⁶

Whereas confessionalists were thus able to make themselves clearly heard, modernists increasingly felt that they were being silenced in institutions and organisations based on the notion of 'neutrality' – not only in public schools. In 1912, the Remonstrant minister H.P. Schim van der Loeff (1879-1949) could still argue that modernists were better off in neutral associations, as these offered them the possibility to exert personal influence on non-modernists, but this conviction had already come under challenge.¹⁴⁷ As early as 1889,

146 E.g.: [H.G. Hagen in:] 'Nederlandsche Protestantenvbond – 's-Gravenhage', *De Hervorming* 1880-50 (11 December 1880), 198; [H.U. Meyboom in:] 'Nederlandsche Protestantenvbond – Assen', *Ibid.* 1883-50 (15 December 1883), 200; W., 'Ingezonden stukken', *Ibid.* 1887-20 (14 May 1887), 79-80, here 80; A. Rutgers van der Loeff, 'Over onze inwendige zending', *Ibid.* 1897-11 (13 March 1897), 41-42, here 41; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Leiden', *Ibid.* 1899-13 (1 April 1899), 50; A. Rutgers van der Loeff, 'Een gezegend werk', *Ibid.* 1904-02 (9 January 1904), 10-11, here 11; K., 'Berichten, enz. – Het komende seizoen', *Ibid.* 1909-37 (11 September 1909), 292; K., 'Berichten, enz. – Samenwerking', *Ibid.* 1910-10 (5 March 1910), 76; H.G. Cannegieter, 'Redactioneel – Een bedelpartij', *Ibid.* 1916-41 (7 October 1916), 352; A.H. van der Hoeve, 'Bondsleven – Over de finantiën', *Ibid.* 1919-28 (12 July 1919), 123; A.C. Schade van Westrum, 'Kerkelijk leven – De moederkerk ten voorbeeld?', *Ibid.* 1921-17 (30 April 1921), 132-134; A.C. Schade van Westrum, 'Hoofdartikel – Propaganda', *Ibid.* 1924-37 (13 September 1924), 290-291; D. Drijver, 'Binnenland – Overreding van andersdenkenden', *Ibid.* 1928-08 (1 September 1928), 63-64, here 63.

147 H.P. Schim van der Loeff, 'Ingezonden stukken – Den heer Menno Huizinga Jr.', *Ibid.* 1912-01 (6 January 1912), 6-7, here 7. Emilie Knappert stressed that contact with non-modernists in neutral associations was also beneficial to modernists themselves, as it contributed to their own spiritual development. See: E.C. Knappert, 'Maatschappelijk werk', *Ibid.* 1912-42 (19 October 1912), 335-336, here 336. At the 1912 NPB meeting, H.T. de Graaf urged modernists not to break with neutral associations. Rather, they should increase their efforts to exert more influence within such associations. See: [H.T. de Graaf in: J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Berichten, enz. – De algemeene vergadering', *Ibid.* 1912-44 (2 November 1912), 356-358, here 357.

J. Herderscheê complained that modernists' opinions and contributions to the common good remained unnoticed.¹⁴⁸ In the 1910s, when the process of pillarisation began to near its apex, and malcontentism unleashed a process of critical self-reflection in modernist circles, such sentiments increased. In 1910, for example, the Dutch Reformed minister F.H.G. van Itersen (1878-1955), pointing to "turbulence," "dynamism," and "a thirst to explore new avenues" in the modernist movement, called on the NPB to organise propagandistic open-air meetings to make modernists more widely heard.¹⁴⁹ Eight years later, A.H. van der Hoeve tried to raise modernists' awareness of the need to have "a principle of their own" and hoped that this awareness would stimulate them not to be too easily satisfied with neutral associations. Social work on a neutral basis, he alleged, was not beneficial to the realisation of the liberal Protestant "religious principle of humanity" in every case.¹⁵⁰ In 1919, to name a last example, H.T. de Graaf alarmingly told his fellow modernists in *De Hervorming* that "we do not exist." In society, politics and academia, liberal Protestantism was not counted among the ideological currents worth considering. For this, De Graaf stressed, modernists should not only blame confessionalsists' intolerance, but also themselves: "religious liberals will only get themselves organised if they are almost squashed to death." Now that social life was becoming ever more compartmentalised along ideological lines, modernists were beginning to pay for their lack of organisation.¹⁵¹

Sentiments such as these, welling up across the whole of the modernist movement, raised the question of whether modernists should try to make

148 J. Herderscheê, 'De tarwekorrel', *De Hervorming* 1889-18 (4 May 1889), 69. Agreeing with Herderscheê that modernists "are virtually everywhere in the minority" and that they "are sometimes being set back in social life [while] having a subordinate position in church life," H. Oort argued in 1903 that this was not only "to the detriment of the highest interests of our fellow human beings"; it also "puts our own faith to test": modernists could become defeatist, thinking that it was a waste of effort to aim at spreading their principles in society. Quoted from: H. Oort, *Zwaar maar zegenrijk. Twee voordrachten over de waarde der vrijzinnige godsdienstrichting* (Assen 1905), 2.

149 F.H.G. van Itersen, 'Ingezonden stukken – Openlucht-samenkomsten', *De Hervorming* 1910-42 (15 October 1910), 334.

150 A.H. van der Hoeve, 'Bondsleven – Geloof en daad', *Ibid.* 1918-26 (29 June 1918), 103.

151 H.T. de Graaf, 'Godsdienst en maatschappij – Wij bestaan niet', *Ibid.* 1919-52 (27 December 1919), 240. Van Mourik Broekman agreed with De Graaf: liberal Protestantism went unnoticed. The general public completely identified religion with orthodoxy and did not bother to consider liberal Protestants. See: M.C. van Mourik Broekman, 'Gesteldheden en verwachtingen betreffende het vrijzinnig protestantisme', *De Smidse* VIII.7/8 (July/August 1933), 193-205, here 202. See also: N.A. Bruining, 'De Centrale Commissie en de kerkelijke groepen', in: *De Centrale Commissie voor het Vrijzinnig Protestantisme* [anonymous, unpublished document, but recorded in the Dutch Central Catalogue under this title] (Utrecht 1937), 3-13, here 11.

their influence more felt in neutral associations or instead establish associations of their own on a liberal Protestant basis.¹⁵² As mentioned, some dissatisfied modernists with a politically liberal persuasion began to organise themselves between the mid-1910s and 1930s – yet only as ‘pressure groups’ *within* or *in addition to* existing liberal parties, not as new, separate parties. As their reflections upon the relationship between religious and social life remained rather vague, these groups failed to attract large support and quickly disappeared. Moreover, ‘pressure groups’ such as the Religious Democratic Circle within the vdb and the *Vrijheidsbond*-minded Association of Modernist Liberals soon became less needed to resist the perceived spirit of religious indifference in political liberalism – both the vdb and the *Vrijheidsbond* included statements in their political programmes in which the significance of Christianity for national life was recognised and both became more receptive to expressions of religion in their party culture.¹⁵³ As for the Association of Modernist Liberals, its other goal of opposing the overrepresentation of antimilitarist and socialist opinions in modernist periodicals soon lost a good deal of its significance as well: Kokje and Boenders, the editors of *Onze Wachter*, had to acknowledge that, albeit “not through our agency,” the liberal Protestant press was singing a different tune at the end of the 1930s than it had at the beginning of that decade.¹⁵⁴ As far as the dissatisfaction with the neutral basis of public education was concerned, only some modernists in The Hague were willing to give up the attempt to permeate public schools with a religious spirit. In three other fields, however, full-scale modernist alternatives to neutral institutions did indeed get off the ground, i.e. the aid for neglected children, youth work, and radio broadcasting. As the motivations behind the founding of these organisations indicate, the modernist Association for the Support of the Uncared-For and Fallen Women, modernist student and youth leagues, and the Liberal Protestant Radio Broadcasting Corporation all came into being following the example of similar confessionalist initiatives, and with the

152 Or, as it was formulated during the annual meeting of the vvH in 1917, whether ‘religiously liberal’ can go hand in hand with ‘neutral’. See: I.M.J. Hoog, ‘Redactioneel – De Amsterdamsche vergaderingen’, *De Hervorming* 1917-16 (21 April 1917), 132-133, here 133.

153 For the vdb, see the paragraphs on the Religious Democratic Circle in section 4 of this chapter. For the *Vrijheidsbond*, see: M.P. Kokje, ‘Herziening in de Liberale Staatspartij’, *Onze Wachter* vi.2 (28 February 1938), 2-3.

154 Kokje and Boenders did not state which reasons had caused the liberal Protestant press to sing a different tune, but they did drop a hint. They stated that many modernist preachers had embraced more ‘nationalistic’ views. Apparently, the threat of German expansionism had made antimilitarist opinions less popular. See: [M.P. Kokje and F.C.M. Boenders], ‘Bij het 5-jarig bestaan van “Onze Wachter”’, *Ibid.* vi.1 (31 January 1938), 1.

intention of counteracting the gradual marginalisation of liberal Protestantism in social life.

7 Case 1: The Association for the Support of the Uncared-For and Fallen Women

Although it was founded during the 1886 annual NPB meeting, the Association for the Support of the Uncared-For and Fallen Women was not integrated into the national framework of the NPB, for the same reason cited in relation to district nursing. It aimed to help boys and girls whose parents were unable to give them a decent upbringing, older girls “who need a stricter upbringing than the one they receive from their parents or caretakers,” single mothers, and profligate women “who are willing to leave behind their lives of sin and shame.”¹⁵⁵ The association tried to establish relief centres – ‘asylums’ in contemporary parlance – that were intended to be, as those involved with the association straightforwardly admitted, modernist equivalents to the so-called ‘*Heldringgestichten*’. The latter had been founded by O.G. Heldring (1804-1876), one of the central figures in the Dutch *Réveil* movement, and provided uncared-for children with an orthodox Protestant upbringing. By founding asylums of their own, the supporters of the association emphasised, liberal Protestants would increase their visibility in the sphere of social assistance, not giving orthodoxy the opportunity to monopolise philanthropy.¹⁵⁶ The association collected enough money to open three asylums: one in Breukelen in 1887 (which moved to Apeldoorn in 1889), a second one in Apeldoorn in 1894, and another one in Epe in 1901. Because these asylums were meant to be temporary shelters, in which children would await their transfer to

155 [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Vereeniging tot steun van verwaarloosden en gevallen’, *De Hervorming* 1886-45 (6 November 1886), 181. The first of the above referred to lower-class girls who might fall into prostitution. See: M. Rietveld-van Wingerden, *Kind in gevaar: reden tot uithuisplaatsing? De vereniging Tot Steun als zorgverlener in een veranderende wereld van de kinderbescherming en jeugdzorg* (Antwerp and Apeldoorn 2017), 53.

156 [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Eene nieuwe vereeniging’, *De Hervorming* 1886-48 (27 November 1886), 192; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Vereeniging tot steun van verwaarloosden en gevallen’, *Ibid.* 1893-28 (15 July 1893), 111; ‘Verwaarloosde kinderen’, *Ibid.* 1898-24 (11 June 1898), 95; J. Herman de Ridder, ‘Van het verwaarloosde kind’, *Ibid.* 1900-49 (8 December 1900), 379; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Berichten, enz. – De Vereeniging tot Steun’, *Ibid.* 1902-16 (19 April 1902), 124-125; *De Vereeniging “Tot Steun”* (s.l. [±1905]), 8; Rietveld-van Wingerden, *Kind in gevaar*, 49.

a foster home, a discussion, referred to in chapter 6, flared up evolving around the question of whether foster homes should be favoured over long-term institutional care.

Another discussion had to do with the intention of the association to work in 'a liberal Protestant spirit'. There was no consensus among modernists as to which consequences this intention should have in practice.¹⁵⁷ Did it mean that children, irrespective of their religious background, should be instilled with a liberal Protestant way of believing in the asylums and ultimately be housed in liberal Protestant foster homes? Or did it mean that the association, taking the liberal Protestant principle of tolerance for every religious conviction as its guideline, should try to make sure that children with a Roman Catholic or orthodox Protestant background received an upbringing in accordance with that religious background? If the first question were answered affirmatively, some argued, then philanthropy was being misused as a means to make propaganda for liberal Protestantism when it should only be an expression of profound indignation, rooted in personal piety, over social wrongs. These modernists further stressed that if the association were to let its aid depend on denominational preferences, it would act just as wrongly as similar associations with a confessionalist basis.¹⁵⁸ Others, however, felt that if the second question were answered affirmatively, the association would be no different from a neutral one and hence would have no reason to exist. They contended that associations on a dogmatic basis were already trying to find Roman Catholic and orthodox Protestant foster families for the uncared-for. What then, they rhetorically asked, was the added value of a modernist basis?¹⁵⁹ The association nonetheless tended to give a negative answer to the first question in practice, as a result of which it constantly complained about a lack of support.¹⁶⁰

157 Rietveld-van Wingerden, *Kind in gevaar*, 71.

158 I.H. Boeke, 'Berichten, enz. – De Vereeniging tot steun van verwaarloosden en gevallen in de "Teeken des Tijds"', *De Hervorming* 1900-33 (18 August 1900), 252; J. Herman de Ridder, 'Voor de verwaarloosde jeugd', *Ibid.* 1900-36 (8 September 1900), 275-276; C.J.A. Bosch, 'Ingezonden stukken – De "Vereeniging tot Steun" en de godsdienstige opvoeding', *Ibid.* 1907-46 (16 November 1907), 365.

159 A. Rutgers van der Loeff, 'De Vereeniging tot steun van verwaarloosden en gevallen en de "Teeken des Tijds"', *Ibid.* 1900-35 (1 September 1900), 266; A. Rutgers van der Loeff, 'Voor de verwaarloosde jeugd', *Ibid.* 1900-39 (29 September 1900), 298-299; A. Rutgers van der Loeff, 'De "Vereeniging tot Steun" en de godsdienstige opvoeding', *Ibid.* 1907-43 (26 October 1907), 339-340; C. Hille Ris Lambers, 'Ingezonden stukken – Seniele aftakeling?', *Ibid.* 1908-05 (1 February 1908), 37; C. Hille Ris Lambers, 'De "Vereeniging tot Steun"', *Ibid.* 1908-14 (4 April 1908), 107.

160 E.g.: 'Verwaarloosde kinderen', *Ibid.* 1898-24 (11 June 1898), 95; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Berichten, enz. – Toch buiten de lijn!', *Ibid.* 1908-05 (1 February 1908), 35-36; P. van der

8 Case 11: Liberal Protestant Student and Youth Leagues

As demonstrated above, the Association for the Support of the Uncared-For and Fallen Women was modelled after older orthodox examples. The same applied to the Liberal Christian League of Students. In the late nineteenth century and in the first decade of the twentieth century, *De Hervorming* regularly contained worrying articles about student life, as did the press in general.¹⁶¹ These articles highlighted two kinds of complaints. First, academia was accused of disseminating a spirit of materialism and intellectualism. When this spirit came to be recognised as the 'spirit of the age' in the build-up to the twentieth century, it simultaneously came to be criticised. Academia led students to think that science and scholarship could ultimately solve all the mysteries of existence. As a result, students one-sidedly focused on the development of the intellectual component of their spiritual life, while grossly neglecting its religious and ethical components.¹⁶² Second, the way in which student culture had developed in the nineteenth century resulted in moral excesses. Conflicting with the liberal-bourgeois civilising offensive and similar confessionalist attempts to increase people's moral standards, visits to brothels, excessive drinking, and demeaning initiation rites ('*ontgroening*') had become accepted practices in nineteenth-century student life. In the modernist press, it was stressed that many students lacked the sense of responsibility to be 'spiritual aristocrats'.¹⁶³

This dissatisfaction with 'materialistic' and 'immoral' student culture, however, only led to the founding of liberal Protestant student associations *after*

Wal, 'Maatschappelijk leven – De Vereeniging tot steun van verwaarloosden en gevalenen', *De Stroom* v.5 (9 January 1926), 2-3, here 3.

161 A.C.J. de Vrankrijker, *Vier eeuwen Nederlandsch studentenleven* (Voorburg 1936), 320-343; P.A.J. Caljé, "De omkeer in 't studentenleven", *Groniek* xxv.118 (1992), 68-93, here 81-82; W. Otterspeer, *De opvoedende kracht van den groentijd. Het Leidse ontgroenschandaal van 1911* (Leiden 1995), 6-7, 14-17, 29-31.

162 E.g.: F., 'Houdt goeden moed!', *De Hervorming* 1905-13 (1 April 1905), 98-99; H.Y. Groenewegen, 'De student en de godsdienst', *Ibid.* 1915-08 (20 February 1915), 65-67; 1915-09 (27 February 1915), 74-75.

163 E.g.: E.J.W. Koch, 'Verblijdend', *Ibid.* 1880-43 (23 October 1880), 170; E.J.W. Koch, 'Hervorming der drinkgewoonten onder studenten', *Ibid.* 1894-24 (16 June 1894), 95-96; M., 'Een ergerlijk misbruik', *Ibid.* 1897-43 (23 October 1897), 170; H. de Lang, 'Het groenwezen', *Ibid.* 1904-32 (6 August 1904), 249-250; 1904-33 (13 August 1904), 257-258; A. van Herwerden-Steffens, 'Ingezonden stukken', *Ibid.* 1904-40 (1 October 1904), 318; H. de Lang, 'Professoraal adviezen', *Ibid.* 1910-22 (28 May 1910), 169-170; C. Hille Ris Lambers, F.W. Drijver and H. de Lang, 'Ingezonden stukken – "Professoraal adviezen"', *Ibid.* 1910-25 (18 June 1910), 196-197; G. Horreüs de Haas, *Student en maatschappij* (Amsterdam 1925), 3-6, 20-23.

the establishing of separate orthodox Protestant and Roman Catholic student organisations.¹⁶⁴ The latter came into being as of the 1880s, having started as study circles in the 1870s. In 1886, the foundations were laid for a national union of neo-Calvinist-oriented student associations, called '*Societas Studiosorum Reformatorum*' ('Reformed Student Society' or SSR). Student associations for Roman Catholics emerged from 1889 onwards.¹⁶⁵ Slightly different in character was the *Nederlandsche Christen-Studenten Vereeniging* (Dutch Christian Student Association or NCSV). Founded in 1896, it did not want to separate its members from student life at large, as the SSR and Catholic student associations did in practice, but rather aimed to prepare students to permeate student life at large with a 'better' spirit. It organised lectures in university towns and annual national conferences, in order to let students reflect upon religious, ethical, and social issues, to reinforce a spirit of brotherhood among them, and to give them the opportunity to intensify their relationship with Christ.¹⁶⁶ The emergence of the NCSV, which was stamped by moderate *ethische* orthodoxy but explicitly welcomed neo-Calvinists and modernists as well – the NCSV even sent a notice of its first summer conference to *De Hervorming* –, gave liberal Protestant students the stimulus to found faith-based student associations of their own.¹⁶⁷ The NCSV, the latter quickly realised, was not able to offer them what they were looking for: its Bible- and Christ-centredness smacked too much of a supernaturalist interpretation of Christianity.¹⁶⁸ It did offer them, however, a model to copy. In 1902, liberal Protestant students in Groningen were the first to establish a *vrijzinnig-godsdienslige studentenvereniging* (liberal religious student association). Their initiative was followed in Utrecht in 1909 and Leiden in

164 A.H. Nooy van der Kolff, 'De religieuze jeugdbeweging', *De Hervorming* 1925-05 (31 January 1925), 35-36; J. de Graaf, '20 jaar VCSB', in: *Vierde lustrum Vrijzinnig Christelijke Studentenbond 1915-1935* (s.l. [1935]), 43-51, here 44.

165 A.C. Flipse, *Christelijke wetenschap. Nederlandse rooms-katholieken en gereformeerden over de natuurwetenschap, 1880-1940* (Hilversum 2014), 134-137.

166 A.J. van den Berg, *De Nederlandse Christen-Studenten Vereniging, 1896-1985* ('s-Gravenhage 1991), 31-38.

167 Van Loenen Martinet was highly critical of this notice. It was written in an orthodox vocabulary and led him to think that the NCSV fostered 'mysticism'. See: [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Van de Ned. Christen-Studenten Vereeniging', *De Hervorming* 1896-34 (22 August 1896), 135.

168 C. de Jongh, 'Berichten, enz. – De Vrijz.-Christ. Studentenvereniging te Leiden', *De Hervorming* 1912-46 (16 November 1912), 374; [H. de Lang], 'Redactioneel – De Vrijz. Chr. Stud. Bond', *Ibid.* 1916-24 (10 June 1916), 201; Van den Berg, *De Nederlandse Christen-Studenten Vereniging*, 82-90.

1912.¹⁶⁹ All of these associations were intended to advance students' spiritual growth as well as their ethical idealism, and were open to all students – just like the NCSV branches –, but with a focus on the spiritual values rooted in the Christian tradition instead of exclusively on the person of Christ. Feeling that a concentration of forces was needed to let liberal Protestantism exert the strongest possible influence on student life, H.Y. Groenewegen urged them to join together,¹⁷⁰ which they did on 8 December 1915 in the *Vrijzinnig-Christelijke Studentenbond*. Shortly afterwards, the VCSB expanded to all other towns with a university or other institute of higher education.¹⁷¹

The VCSB ultimately aimed at being the breeding ground for the liberal Protestant leaders of the future. It wanted to prepare those individuals who, based on their intellectual capacities, could be expected to obtain key positions in society for carrying liberal Protestant principles into social life, with the intention to turn liberal Protestantism into a more influential cultural force than it had been so far.¹⁷² To further spread liberal Protestant ethical and religious idealism among young people – a broad category roughly encompassing twelve- to thirty-five-year-olds – who had not, or had not yet, received higher education and who had, or did not have, a liberal Protestant background, leading modernist theologians helped to get several other organisations off the ground: the *Vrijzinnig-Christelijke Jongerenbond*, which primarily consisted of urban young adults, in 1919; the *Rijzende Kerk* (Emerging Church), which targeted the early-adult rural population and was more

169 D. Tjalsma, 'De Vrijzinnig Christelijke Studentenbond', in: C. Boer et al. (eds.), *Het jonge hart. Het verhaal van de Vrijzinnig Christelijke Jeugd Centrale, 1915-1985* (Zoetermeer 1994), 20-105, here 20-21. Next to the liberal religious student associations in Groningen, Utrecht, and Leiden, modernist-oriented *studentenverenigingen ter behandeling van ethische en godsdienstige vraagstukken* (student associations for the discussion of ethical and religious issues) existed in Leiden, Delft, and, according to Tjalsma, in Amsterdam at around 1910. In a lecture that he gave in the Leiden association on 27 October 1911, S.K. Bakker emphasised that students should act in accordance with their status as 'spiritual aristocrats' of the future, by openly declaring themselves against immorality and leading lives of high moral standing. See: S.K. Bakker, *Heeft de student zedelijke plichten?* (Leiden 1911), 11-12, 18-19.

170 [H.Y. Groenewegen in: H. de Lang], 'Redactioneel – De Vrijzinnig Christelijke Studentenvereniging te Leiden', *De Hervorming* 1915-14 (3 April 1915), 119-120; H.Y. Groenewegen, *De student en de godsdienst* (Leiden 1915), 19-23.

171 Tjalsma, 'De Vrijzinnig Christelijke Studentenbond', 21.

172 E.g.: 'Redactioneel – Het hoofdbestuur van den Vrijzinnig-Christelijken Studenten-Bond', *De Hervorming* 1916-20 (13 May 1916), 168-169, here 168; H. Willemse, 'De belofte van het kader', *Ibid.* 1926-01 (2 January 1926), 3; J.A. de Koning, *De jeugdbeweging* (Huis ter Heide 1928), 10.

closely attached to congregational life than the VCSB and VCJB, in 1928; and the *Vrijzinnig-Christelijke Jeugdgemeenschappenbond* (Liberal Christian League of Youth Communities or VCJGB), the members of which mostly attended secondary schools, in 1932.¹⁷³

As this proliferation of leagues suggests, the modernist youths were, more pronouncedly than the orthodox, not only organised on the basis of age, but also along the lines of social differences. In orthodoxy, the ultimate purpose of youth work was *geloofsoverdracht* and *geloofsbehoud*, or the development and preservation of a personal relationship with the living Christ within the 'right' dogmatic framework. This framework – the 'right' conceptions of faith and the 'right' way of believing – was the same for young people from all walks of life.¹⁷⁴ In consequence, orthodox youth work was embedded in, or at least closely linked to, church life. After all, the church was the guardian and carrier of the 'right' faith. In modernist circles, on the other hand, youth work was about *geloofsverwerving*, or enabling young people to develop personal conceptions of God. In modernism, there were no theological 'dogmas' to pass on. Modernist youth work was therefore more remote from church life.¹⁷⁵ Because of the implicit link made in modernist thinking, as expressed in modernist discourse, between social rank and spiritual development, modernist youth work was also socially more differentiated: the spiritual needs and 'position' on the 'ladder' of spiritual development of individuals in dissimilar social positions were believed to be different. One single youth league could thus never be sufficient.¹⁷⁶ This same line of reasoning even caused a minority to plead

173 K.M. Witteveen, 'De andere bonden', in: Boer et al. (eds.), *Het jonge hart*, 106–203, here 106–110, 124–125, 128–132. In 1924, the *Vrijzinnig-Christelijke Jeugdcentrale* (Liberal Christian Youth Centre or VCJC) was founded as the umbrella organisation of the VCSB, the VCJB, and ultimately also of the *Rijzende Kerk* and the VCJGB.

174 J.C. Sturm, *Een goede gereformeerde opvoeding. Over neo-calvinistische moraalpedagogiek (1880–1950), met speciale aandacht voor de nieuw-gereformeerde jeugdorganisaties* (Kampen 1988), esp. 89–90, 194–197.

175 According to some, the distance between the VCSB and the VCJB on the one hand and church life on the other hand was even *too* big. See: A.C. Schade van Westrum, 'Kerkelijk leven – Ook al buitenkerkelijk?', *De Hervorming* 1920–05 (7 February 1920), 19; F. Oort, 'Kerkelijk leven – Vrijzinnige jongerenkerk', *Ibid.* 1922–45 (11 November 1922), 358; A.C. Schade van Westrum, 'Godsdienstig gemeenschapsleven – De jeugdbeweging en de kerk', *Ibid.* 1924–04 (26 January 1924), 27–29.

176 This is particularly accentuated in: E.C. Knappert, 'Ingezonden – Winterconferentie van den Vrijzinnig Christelijken Jongeren Bond', *Ibid.* 1921–02 (15 January 1921), 14–15, here 14; J. Lindeboom, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Jeugdwerk op de Drentsche hei', *Ibid.* 1922–37 (16 September 1922), 291–292, here 292.

for separate church services for young people, working-class people, and more 'cultured' people respectively.¹⁷⁷

Parallel to the orthodox Protestant network of student associations and *jongelings-, knapen-, meisjes- en jongedochtersverenigingen* (church clubs for older and younger boys and girls), a tightly organised modernist youth movement thus emerged in the interwar years. This development, the driving forces behind this youth movement felt, was badly needed. As J.A. de Koning, one of those moving spirits, contended, liberal Protestantism simply had to keep up with orthodoxy in this respect: after all, there was a fierce spiritual battle going on for the souls of the youth and the future of the country.¹⁷⁸

The youth movement immediately obtained a position of its own within the modernist movement at large, which was accentuated by the separate representation the VCSB and the VCJB received in 1923, next to the various ecclesial groups of modernists and the NPB, in the then newly created Central Committee for Liberal Protestantism. On the one hand, this was so, because the youth movement, as stated above, in large part bypassed denominational life. On the other hand, the youth movement instantaneously became an important constituent of Dutch liberal Protestantism, because it manifested itself with much fervour, and was welcomed as a potential booster of renewed vitality and religious renewal in the modernist movement.¹⁷⁹ No one emphasised this last expectation than K.H. Roessingh. In a 1925 article in *De Hervorming*, he stated that he felt that modernists had little to be proud of: they had failed to bring forth a theology that was "of overriding importance to cultural life or merely to the modernist movement itself," to make themselves heard in social life, to bring the social question and ecclesial issues to a satisfactory solution, and to inspire admiration. Amidst all these failures, the modernist youth movement was "the best we have." Other than in the NPB, the passivity of which he saw reflected in "the gentleman who lectures and the audience that listens," Roessingh noticed "a lot of very dynamic, sincere, personally, and sometimes communally experienced real modernist religiosity in the youth movement. There is something emerging out of this youth movement, something liberal

177 E.g.: A.C. Schade van Westrum, 'Kerkelijk leven – De student en de kerk', *De Hervorming* 1918-40 (5 October 1918), 159; H.W., 'Jeugdkerken', *Ibid.* 1926-29 (17 July 1926), 226-227; 1926-32 (7 August 1926), 252.

178 J.A. de Koning, 'De Amsterdamsche maatschappij voor jongemannen en nog wat', *Ibid.* 1925-10 (7 March 1925), 76; De Koning, *De jeugdbeweging*, 14.

179 Exemplary in this respect are: E.D. Spelberg, 'Jong modernisme', in: *Vrijzinnig Christelijke Jongerenbond – Jong modernisme* (s.l. [1923]), 3-11, here 9-11; J.M. van Veen, 'Grepën uit de geschiedenis van de v.c.j.c.', in: v.c.j.c. – *Vrijz. Chr. Studentenbond, Rijzende Kerk, Vrijz. Chr. Jeugdwerk, Vrijz. Chr. Jongerenbond* (s.l. [1939]), 6-10, here 6.

Christianity at large cannot do without.”¹⁸⁰ The future of the modernist movement as such, others claimed while echoing Roessingh, depended on the VCSB, the VCJB, the *Rijzende Kerk*, and the VCJGB.¹⁸¹

9 Case III: The Liberal Protestant Radio Broadcasting Corporation VPRO

A spiritual battle was not only raging in youth life, but also on the airwaves. Once technology was advanced enough to turn it into a mass medium, the radio in the Netherlands did not merely come to be organised along ideological lines, it even became the very symbol of pillarised social life.¹⁸² On 6 November 1919, the engineer H.H. Schotanus à Steringa Idzerda (1885–1944) was the first to make a radio broadcast in the Netherlands and even in Europe. He remained the only Dutch broadcaster for a general audience until 21 July 1923, when the Hilversum-based *Nederlandsche Seintoestellenfabriek* (Dutch Transmitter Factory or NSF) started to regularly broadcast through a transmitting station of its own. As its broadcasts proved to be a success and began to take up so much time that they could no longer be combined with its actual business – the *production* of transmitters –, the NSF decided to organise its broadcasting activities under the name of the ‘*Hilversumsche Draadloze Omroep*’ (‘the Hilversum Wireless’ or HDO) as of 1 April 1924. In order to develop into, and gain government recognition as, the national broadcasting organisation in the Netherlands, at which its promoters aimed, the HDO held on to the principle of neutrality and accordingly wanted to broadcast “with no preference for any religious or political conviction and with the intention to keep away from anything that could offend [any religious or denominational minority].”¹⁸³

Although it had created, and never fully privatised, the HDO, the NSF was willing to let out its transmitting facilities to third parties, in the hope that this

180 K.H. Roessingh, ‘Jeugdbeweging en vrijzinnigheid’, *De Hervorming* 1925–04 (24 January 1925), 26–27, here 26.

181 *Vrijzinnig Christelijke Jeugdbeweging – V.C.S.B., V.C.J.B.* (s.l. [±1925]), 7; E.D. Spelberg et al., ‘Jeugddag 1926’, *De Hervorming* 1926–02 (9 January 1926), 10; ‘Ons jeugdwerk’, *Ibid.* 1930–04 (8 April 1930), 31–32, here 31; D. Drijver, ‘Binnenland – Jeugdbeweging’, *Ibid.* 1932–05 (15 May 1932), 35–36; ‘Boekbespreking – “Jaarboekje voor 1933 van de Vrijzinnig Christelijke Studentenbond”’, *Ibid.* 1933–03 (24 March 1933), 23; T.A. Bergstra, ‘Onze balans’, in: *Lustrumboek. 5^e lustrum Vrijzinnig Christelijke Studentenbond* (s.l. [1940]), 88–94.

182 It could even be argued that the pillarisation paradigm as such is primarily based on a projection of the broadcasting situation onto Dutch society. Cf.: Van Dam, *Staat van verzuiling*.

183 Quoted in: H.P.M.J. Van Pelt, *De omroep in revisie. Ontwikkeling van het radio- en televisiebestel in Nederland en België* (Leuven 1974), 22. See also: J. de Boer, *De plaats van de*

would stimulate the sale of transmitters and hence increase its earnings. Some orthodox Protestants, nearly all of whom were members of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, did not allow this opportunity to pass. Feeling that a 'neutral' broadcaster could never satisfy orthodox Protestant interests and needs and in fact favoured liberalism – identifying 'neutral' with 'liberal' was a common ploy for confessionalists to demand the right, and to mobilise their co-religionists, to organise themselves separately in all spheres of life¹⁸⁴ –, they wanted to prevent the 'neutral' HDO from monopolising the radio and founded the *Nederlandsche Christelijke Radio-Vereeniging* (Dutch Christian Radio Broadcasting Association or NCRV) on 15 November 1924. Notwithstanding the fear in orthodox Protestant circles that the radio might engross people just as much as sports and cinema, causing them to neglect their relationship with God, the founders of the NCRV for their part recognised the potential of the radio for spreading orthodox Protestant principles and for confirming orthodox Protestants in their outlook on life.¹⁸⁵ Inspired by a similar drive to thwart the ambition of the HDO, to propagandise, and to counteract the dissemination of dissident views, the *Katholieke Radio-Omroep* (Catholic Radio Broadcasting Corporation or KRO) and the *Vereeniging van Arbeiders Radio-Amateurs* (Association of Workers' Radio Amateurs or VARA) came into being in 1925.¹⁸⁶ With the NCRV, the KRO, and the VARA now renting broadcasting time from the NSF and presenting themselves as equal, ideology-based alternatives to the HDO, the government, which had thus far not concerned itself with broadcasting, was forced to make permanent radio regulations in the late 1920s.

Liberal Protestants shared the ideal of one national broadcasting service with the HDO. By analogy with their ideal of one school for all Dutch children, they envisioned a broadcasting corporation in which all religious minorities in the Netherlands would be given the opportunity to express themselves and to get into contact with each other. This, it was hoped, would lead to more respect among those minorities. Some modernists argued that it was absolutely necessary to follow the example of orthodox Protestants, Roman

omroep in het openbare leven in Nederland tot 1940 (Leiden 1946), 16–20, 53–60; J.Th.M. Bank, 'Een halve eeuw omroephistorie in hoofdlijnen', in: W. Huygen (ed.), *AVRO 50. Historie en perspectieven* (Hilversum 1973), 9–48, here 12–15; H.B.M. Wijffes, 'De ballade van de bolhoed. Willem Vogt en het debacle van de nationale omroep (1923–1930)', in: *Jaarboek Mediageschiedenis* 1 (Amsterdam 1989), 114–136, here 114.

184 J.H.J. van den Heuvel, *Nationaal of verzuild? De strijd om het Nederlandse omroepbestel in de periode 1923–1947* (Baarn 1976), 13–14.

185 P. Bak, "'Niets te vroeg, maar gelukkig nog niet te laat'", in: P. Bak and W.J. Berkelaar, *Verkundiging en verstrooiing. Een geschiedenis van de NCRV 1924–2014* (Amsterdam 2014), 8–35, here 26–30; P. Bak, 'Wie niet voor Mij is. . .', in: *Ibid.*, 36–63, here 40–47.

186 A.F. Manning, *Zestig jaar KRO. Uit de geschiedenis van een omroep* (Baarn 1985), 23–49; H.B.M. Wijffes, *VARA. Biografie van een omroep* (Amsterdam 2009), 24–65.

Catholics, and the social democrats by establishing a separate liberal Protestant radio organisation. If a national broadcasting service were indeed ever to come into being, then this organisation would make sure that liberal Protestants were involved in it. And if such a service did not come into being, then the proposed organisation would at least enable liberal Protestants to make themselves heard on the radio, just as their confessionalist adversaries could do through the KRO and the NCRV. The feeling that there simply was no choice but to establish a modernist broadcasting association led the Central Committee for Liberal Protestantism to convert its subcommittee for broadcasting affairs, which was exploring possibilities for airing modernist religious services since 24 May 1924, into the independent, membership-based *Vrijzinnig-Protestantsche Radio-Omroep* on 29 May 1926. Contrary to the other broadcasting organisations, the VPRO did not want to include anything but religious services and lectures with a religious or cultural character in its programming.¹⁸⁷ Due to a strong lobbying by the NCRV, the KRO, and the VARA, the then all-confessionalist cabinet decided in 1930 not to establish a national broadcasting service, but to divide up the available broadcasting time as follows: the HDO, now called '*Algemeene Vereeniging Radio-Omroep*' ('General Radio Broadcasting Association' or AVRO),¹⁸⁸ the NCRV, the KRO, and the VARA each received a share of twenty per cent, while the remaining twenty per cent was reserved for 'general' programming, produced by these four entities in rotation, and for the number of smaller radio associations that had come into being after 1925, including the VPRO.¹⁸⁹

The distribution of broadcasting time caused outrage and fury from the side of the AVRO. The latter had been given the same share as the KRO, the NCRV, and the VARA, implying that it was thought to represent a fourth segment of the population next to Roman Catholics, orthodox Protestants, and social democrats. According to those three groups, it did indeed: the AVRO was the broadcaster for and of political liberals. This was true in practice, but not intentionally: it was only because those other three groups preferred broadcasting organisations of their own, and no other political parties than

187 N.A. Bruining, 'De Vrijzinnig Protestantsche Radio Omroep', in: *Ons geloofsbezit. Propaganda-uitzending v.p.r.o. 24 februari 1928* (Huis ter Heide [1928]), 3-5; N.A. Bruining, *De beïnvloeding van ons volk door den v.p.r.o. Voordracht, gehouden ter algemeene vergadering van de Vereeniging van Vrijz. Hervormden op 13 juni 1935 te Middelburg* (s.l. [1935]), 6-8; E.D. Spelberg, *Hier Hilversum, de v.p.r.o.!* (s.l. [1961]), 9-12; J. Haasbroek, A.A. Kooyman and J. Rogier, 'Het einde van de verloedering', in: A.A. Kooyman and M. van Rooy (eds.), *De potentie van een dwerg. Een halve eeuw VPRO, van Spelberg tot Servet* (Amsterdam 1976), 11-43, here 13-17; Blom, "Het geloof van de radio op vrijdagavond", 88-91.

188 De Boer, *De plaats van de omroep*, 76-78; Wijfjes, 'De ballade van de bolhoed', 120-125.

189 Van den Heuvel, *Nationaal of verzuimd?*, 33-42.

the liberal ones were against a compartmentalisation of the radio along ideological lines, that the neutral AVRO received unanimous support from those with a politically liberal persuasion. After 1930, the AVRO still considered itself to represent the Dutch population as a whole: directing its programming to a general audience and not being based on any particular religious or political principles, it was the only truly national broadcaster and thus felt that it deserved the most broadcasting time.¹⁹⁰ In VPRO circles, the ideal of one national broadcasting service, modelled after the British Broadcasting Corporation, continued to be cherished as well.¹⁹¹ Yet, the feeling that the founding of the VPRO had not been unnecessary intensified in the 1930s. The neutrality of the self-proclaimed 'national' AVRO proved to be mainly a negative one: instead of appreciating the various manifestations of religious faith in national life, the AVRO ignored them most of the time. In the spare instances in which it did find a slot for religion in its programming, it moreover fully identified religion with *orthodox* religion. To secure the support of (moderately) orthodox members of the Dutch Reformed Church, many of whom lamented the ongoing process of pillarisation and denounced the neo-Calvinist dominance in the NCRV, the AVRO invited *ethische* and *confessionele* Reformed ministers to give homiletic morning talks under its auspices. Liberal Protestant ministers, on the other hand, were not allowed to do so, because, as the AVRO management reasoned, modernists did not take offence at orthodox sermons, but modernist ones would certainly annoy orthodox. In the latter case, the AVRO would no longer adhere to its principle of not offending anyone. The AVRO, VPRO sympathisers felt, interpreted 'neutrality' in such a way that it left no room for liberal Protestant voices and hence could not rightfully claim to be the national Dutch broadcaster.¹⁹²

190 'Algemeenheid in den aether', *Algemeen Handelsblad* CIV.33932 (5 August 1931), 1; 'De radiostrijd. A.V.R.O. nationaal?', *De Tijd* LXXXVIII.26721 (30 December 1932), 1.

191 Until well into the 1960s. See: *Een nationale omroep?* (s.l. 1960), 18. In 1968, the VPRO lost its liberal Protestant identity and became the mouthpiece of the baby boom generation.

192 D. Drijver, 'Binnenland', *De Hervorming* 1930-06 (13 June 1930), 42; 'De v.p.r.o. en de a.v.r.o.', *Het Vaderland* (7 July 1930), evening paper A, 2; 'De zendtijdwijziging van den v.p.r.o. en de a.v.r.o.', *Ibid.* (6 November 1936), evening paper D, 2; F.C.M. Boenders, 'De AVRO-dominee', *Onze Wachter* v.2 (24 February 1939), 2. In turn, the AVRO accused the VPRO of being an 'appendage' to the VARA. See: 'A.V.R.O. en v.p.r.o.', *Algemeen Handelsblad* CIII.33542 (8 July 1930), morning paper, 5; 'De zendtijdwijziging van den v.p.r.o. en de a.v.r.o.', *Het Vaderland* (6 November 1936), evening paper D, 2. Some liberal Protestants made a similar complaint: they accused the VPRO of giving more broadcasting time to preachers with a socialist persuasion than to those with a liberal one. E.g.: 'Ingezonden – Vrijzinnig Protestantsche Radio Omroep', *De Hervorming* 1929-03 (2 March 1929), 20; J. Luchies, "De v.p.r.o. een baken in zee", *Onze Wachter* III.6 (29 June 1935), 3.

10 The Modernist Movement and the Process of Pillarisation: An Evaluation

The first generation of modernists favoured politics based on liberal principles and an organisation of society based on the principle of neutrality. The majority of later-generation modernists continued to do so as well. Yet, dissatisfaction with liberal politics and neutrality-based schools and other voluntary associations increased over time. In the modernist opinion press, a growing number of articles came to be published in which liberal political parties, neutral public schools, and neutrality-based '*algemene*' ('general') associations were blamed for being permeated with a spirit of religious indifference. Although modernists generally preferred to increase their influence *within* those parties, schools, and associations, separate modernist organisations were created in some segments of social life, predominantly in the 1910s, 1920s, and 1930s.

These organisations only came into being – and this is a crucial point – when it began to dawn upon modernists that, due to the religious indifference prevailing in political liberalism and in the neutral voluntary sector, orthodox Protestants and Roman Catholics, who had started to separately organise themselves in all spheres of life in the late nineteenth century, had managed to nearly monopolise religion as a political and social force, and to enhance their influence in politics and society. The rise of right-wing modernism and the 'ecclesial turn' nourished this awareness. Both of these processes caused modernists to reflect upon the nature of their movement, stimulating them to identify themselves as liberal *Christians* instead of as *religious* liberals. Both of these processes, in combination with the process of pillarisation, intensified modernists' sense of urgency to no longer allow confessionalists to lay exclusive claim to the adjective 'Christian'¹⁹³ as well as their sense of having specific 'principles' that would not automatically be materialised in existing non-faith-based organisations. In order to propagate those principles more explicitly and to counteract the further social marginalisation of the modernist movement, modernists generally acknowledged that they needed to make themselves better heard. Some of them believed that there was no choice but to follow confessionalists' example and urged their fellow modernists to organise themselves separately.

The institutionalisation of liberal Protestantism that was the result of such thinking culminated in the founding of the VPRO, "a uniting factor among

193 Exemplary in this respect is: F. Dijkema, 'In den stroom – De v.p.r.o.', *De Stroom* IX.25 (24 May 1930), 3.

[all liberal Protestant] groups,”¹⁹⁴ in 1926, and the purchase of a building at the Nieuwegracht 27 in Utrecht, in which the secretariats of the CC, the NPB, the VPRO, the Association for the Support of the Uncared-For and Fallen Women, the various youth organisations, a modernist press agency, and later also the VVH and the Remonstrant Brotherhood came to be housed, in 1931. In the words of the Remonstrant theologian Th.M. van Leeuwen, this building symbolised “the dream of a liberal Protestant pillar.”¹⁹⁵ This dream was particularly strong among VPRO executives. One of them, N.A. Bruining (1886-1963), even expressed the hope that the VPRO would become the mouthpiece of a fully formed fifth pillar, next to the pillars already represented by the NCRV, the KRO, the VARA, and the AVRO.¹⁹⁶ (Bruining apparently considered the AVRO to represent a genuine pillar as well.¹⁹⁷) The creation of separate modernist organisations was started with reluctance,¹⁹⁸ but was enthusiastically recommended by Bruining. Was this enthusiasm not rather out of place? Was the founding of separate modernist organisations not an admission of weakness, a concession that the modernist movement had definitely failed and an acknowledgement of the superiority of confessionalism? This question had already been raised in the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* in 1918. Reflecting upon the initiatives that modernists took to reach “the vulgar herd,” an anonymous reporter, who showed sympathy with the modernist movement, noticed with regret that whenever modernists tried to exert more influence in social life, “they are driven back to the old-fashioned means of propaganda of their [confessionalist] adversaries over and over again.” If, he cynically added, their religious life indeed had “a distinct character,” why did modernists then fail to invent unorthodox methods to propagate their principles?¹⁹⁹ Because, A.H. van der Hoeve responded, there was no better way

194 Th.M. van Leeuwen, ‘Woord vooraf’, in: Boer et al. (eds.), *Het jonge hart*, 9-11, here 9. Van Diggelen even calls the VPRO the very ‘centre’ of Dutch liberal Protestantism. See: M.J. van Diggelen, ‘Nicolette Adriana Bruining (1886-1963). Een pionier in dienst van de vrijzinnigheid’, in: De Baar et al. (eds.), *Honderd jaar vrouwen op de kansel, 1911-2011*, 93-100, here 98.

195 Th.M. van Leeuwen, ‘Nieuwegracht 27: de droom van een vrijzinnige zuil’, in: De Baar and Van Dijk (eds.), *Herinnering en identiteit*, 167-178.

196 Blom, “Het geloof van de radio op vrijdagavond”, 84.

197 As she made clear in 1937, she indeed did. See: Bruining, ‘De Centrale Commissie en de kerkelijke groepen’, 11.

198 In this respect, Molendijk coins the term “willy-nilly pillarisation.” See: Molendijk, ‘De vervluchtiging van het vrijzinnig protestantisme in Nederland’, 128.

199 ‘Kerknieuws – De Nederlandsche Protestantenvbond’, *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* LXXV.286 (15 October 1918), evening paper A, 1.

to permeate society with those principles than to imitate orthodoxy. He had no difficulty in admitting that the VCSB was nothing more than a modernist copy of the NCSV, and that modernist open-air meetings were modelled after orthodox mission festivals. After all, orthodoxy “is much older than modernism and hence has much more experience [in making itself heard].” With orthodoxy now setting the tone in society, Van der Hoeve implied, mimicking it at least to a certain extent was necessary if modernism was to be heard.²⁰⁰

A genuine liberal Protestant pillar never did come into being. The organisations based on modernist principles were too few in number to qualify as a *zuil*. Moreover, only one of the three motives historians and sociologists consider as foundational for the process of pillarisation played a role in the founding of modernist organisations. The emancipatory motive of gaining more political power, or of leaving behind a socially and culturally backward position, did not apply to modernists: they were anything but socially and culturally backward, nor did they have to ‘gain’ access to the political arena. The protectionist motive of warding off external influences was absent as well, for modernists were highly receptive to what was going on outside of their own circles. Only the apologetic or propagandistic motive of making themselves heard was a stimulus for (some) modernists to organise themselves separately.²⁰¹ Modernists also lacked a political party of their own, which was one of the constitutive elements of a *zuil*.²⁰² A key feature of ‘pillars’ was that they ran vertically across society, meaning that the organisations of which they consisted enjoyed significant support from people of all social classes.²⁰³ Being rooted in the rather bourgeoisie-centred modernist movement, liberal Protestant organisations probably did not have a membership in which all social classes were relatively speaking equally represented, at least not to the same

200 A.H. van der Hoeve, ‘Bondsleven – Tentzending’, *De Hervorming* 1918-47 (23 November 1918), 187.

201 Hendriks, *De emancipatie van de gereformeerden*; J.M.G. Thurlings, *De wankele zuil. Nederlandse katholieken tussen assimilatie en pluralisme* (Nijmegen 1971), 18-34; Stuurman, *Verzuiling, kapitalisme en patriarchaat*, 72-75; Righart, *De katholieke zuil in Europa*, 29-32; P.J.M. Pennings, *Verzuiling en ontzuiling: de lokale verschillen. Opbouw, instandhouding en neergang van de plaatselijke zuilen in de verschillende delen van Nederland na 1880* (Kampen 1991), 2-20; Groot, *Rooms en rechtzinnigen en nieuwlichters*, 16-18; H. de Liagre Böhl, ‘Hoofddlijnen in de politieke ontwikkeling van het moderne Nederland’, in: Becker (ed.), *Maatschappij en Nederlandse politiek*, 205-233, here 214-215.

202 Stuurman, *Verzuiling, kapitalisme en patriarchaat*, 71; Hellemans, *Strijd om de moderniteit*, 24-25.

203 M. Duijvendak and P. Kooij, *Sociale geschiedenis. Theorie en thema's* (Assen 1992), 75.

extent as Roman Catholic and orthodox Protestant ones did.²⁰⁴ For all of these reasons, it is incorrect to distinguish a liberal Protestant 'pillar' in the interwar period – at most, the vague contours of a 'pillaret', a small, very incomplete network of modernist organisations, became visible in the 1920s.

It is striking, yet, as explained in chapter 6, perfectly understandable, that the founding of nearly all of the organisations on modernist principles was initiated and effectuated by theologians and preachers. Once founded, these ministers continued to lead those organisations. Modernist organisations were thus not only modelled after orthodox ones, they were also characterised by the *dominocratie* (the leadership and dominance of ministers) that modernists claimed to dislike in orthodoxy. In fact, while no theologians were among the first leading men of the NCRV, for example, the first management team of the VPRO solely consisted of theologians: N.A. Bruining and the Dutch Reformed ministers J.P. de Graaff (1883-1965) and E.D. Spelberg (1898-1968).²⁰⁵ The founding of the VPRO is exemplary for the evolution of the modernist movement as a social force: instead of leading the way, modernists eventually *followed* trends in society and culture. They not only failed to develop new forms of worship, or even at the very least to reform church life, but also to be the vanguard in social life that they wanted to be.²⁰⁶

204 For the same reason, it can be questioned whether genuine socialist and neutral/liberal 'pillars' indeed ever existed: working-class people and the bourgeoisie respectively were overrepresented in the membership of socialist and neutral organisations. Lijphart distinguishes a third 'pillar' next to a Roman Catholic and an orthodox Protestant one. He calls this third pillar the 'neutral' one, consisting of both a social democratic and a liberal component. See: Lijphart, *Verzuiling, pacificatie en kentering in de Nederlandse politiek*, 28, 34. See also: Stuurman, *Verzuiling, kapitalisme en patriarchaat*, 67-69; Pennings, *Verzuiling en ontzuiling*, 21-24.

205 Van Pelt, *De omroep in revisie*, 39; Bak, 'Wie niet voor Mij is. . .', 43-45.

206 Or, as C.E. Hooykaas phrased it, "religious liberals have drifted away from the centre of social and political life." Quoted from: C.E. Hooykaas, 'Maatschappelijk leven – Christelijk humanisme in staat en maatschappij', *De Stroom* 11.27 (16 June 1923), 2.

PART 5

The International Context



Fields Ripe for Harvest?

1 “A Difficult Combination”

As indicated in the previous chapters, orthodox Protestantism fulfilled the role of what sociology calls a ‘significant other’, in comparison with, and distinction from, which the identity and development of the modernist movement took shape. For example, as analysed in the last chapter, initiatives to found separate modernist organisations were taken following the example of orthodoxy and motivated by the perception that modernists’ position in society was being marginalised due to orthodoxy’s bigger concentration of power. Orthodoxy not only displayed its superiority in Dutch society, but also in the Dutch East Indies – both in ‘European’, ‘colonial’ life and in the field of foreign missions. While engaging in missionary activities among indigenous Indonesians was seen as something obvious in orthodox circles, the liberal Reformed minister C.B. Burger (1897-1983) noted in 1925, by contrast, that modernism and foreign missions had been “a difficult combination” ever since the emergence of the modernist movement.¹ In the mid-nineteenth century, Burger explained, involvement of modernists in foreign missions had been perceived as problematic among orthodox Protestants. A significant number of the latter had felt that the only Dutch missionary society existing at the time, the predominantly Dutch Reformed *Nederlandsch Zendeling-Genootschap* (Dutch Missionary Society or NZG), did not distance itself explicitly enough from modern theology, leading to the creation of several orthodox alternative missionary societies in the late 1850s.² Afterwards, however, the involvement of modernists in foreign missions became problematic among modernists themselves, as a result of which support for missionary activities diminished in their ranks.³ Why was this the case? Why were foreign missions such a controversial issue in the modernist movement?

1 [C.B. Burger in:] ‘Geestelijk leven – De vrijzinnigen en de zending’, *De Telegraaf* XXXIII.12493 (8 July 1925), 12.

2 A separate Dutch Mennonite missionary society had already come into being in 1847. The NZG had no formal ties to the Dutch Reformed Church. See: J.A.B. Jongeneel, *Nederlandse zendingsgeschiedenis. Ontmoeting van protestantse christenen met andere godsdiensten en geloven (1601-1917)* (Zoetermeer 2015), 155-156, 158-159.

3 [C.B. Burger in:] ‘Geestelijk leven – De vrijzinnigen en de zending’, *De Telegraaf* XXXIII.12493 (8 July 1925), 12.

Because a handful of modernists, most of whom connected with the NZG in one way or another, eagerly tried to respond to their co-religionists' objections to involvement with missionary activities, foreign missions were a recurring issue throughout the entire period in which *De Hervorming* was published. The arguments that both they and their opponents advanced are analysed in this chapter.

2 Foreign Missions as a 'Problem'

Foreign missions have to be distinguished from two other forms of 'mission': home missions and evangelisation. Home missions include all domestic social welfare activities motivated by Christian humanitarianism to help the poor and needy, and intended to make the name of Jesus known among them. As is clear from chapters 6 and 7, such activities were controversial in modernist circles: modernists wanted to assist the poor and needy, but felt that welfare work should *only* be conducted out of philanthropic motivations, not with the ulterior motive of 'proselytising'. Social work should contribute to strengthening people's inner lives by bringing them into contact with high-principled 'spiritual aristocrats' – whose religious spirit would, it was believed, 'instil' itself into the minds of the destitute in due course –, not by explicitly preaching a religious message to them. To avoid the risk that it might be done to make 'converts' for the modernist movement, social work was therefore ultimately not integrated in the framework of the national NPB. While an attempt to 'Christianise' people is made in both word and deed in home missions, evangelisation is restricted to spreading Christianity in word: it intends to lead apostates back to Christianity or to revive the faith of those who were Christians mostly in name.⁴ Evangelisation was also problematic in modernist circles: modernists felt they had a word for the world, but did not want to tell people what to believe. Modernist sermons and brochures were accordingly intended to help individuals internalise certain principles of life, on the basis of which they could form their own conceptions of God. At the 1888 NPB as-

4 In Dutch, 'evangelisation' is called '*evangelisatie*', 'home missions' are denoted as '*inwendige zending*', and foreign missions' are usually simply called '*zending*'. The usage of the term '*uitwendige zending*' to refer to the latter is nowadays rather archaic. Hoekstra regards 'home missions' and 'evangelisation' as synonyms. See: E.G. Hoekstra, *Christendom* (Kampen [2003] 2006), 235. However, unlike evangelisation, home missions are by definition coupled with social work. Foreign missions usually have a social, humanitarian aspect to them as well: alongside preaching, they often include building hospitals and schools.

sembly, F.W.B. van Bell spelled out what 'evangelisation' – a term modernists did not use themselves – should consist of:

We want to show in ourselves the harmony between our religious life and the wealth of human development, and to work [to establish this harmony in others] – not by forcibly turning others into modernists, but by commending ourselves by being who we are and what we do; not by imposing our beliefs upon others, but by the written and the spoken word. We derive our strength and our hope for achieving our goals from the conviction that we, by so doing, actualise the human predisposition [to believe in God].⁵

Similar words could be frequently heard in modernist circles. In 1891, for example, the modernist-minded schoolteacher C.F.A. Zernike (1859–1922) wrote that modernists should only 'preach' their principles to others by practising those principles rather than by making propaganda.⁶ Modernists did not want to breed proselytes, but, to cite a speech A.W. van Wijk gave in 1900, they only wanted to raise spiritual consciousness, "to cultivate and generate religious life," regardless of the conceptions in which this religious life came to be clothed in individual cases.⁷

Contrary to home missions and evangelisation, foreign missions do not take place in a Christian context: they intend to spread Christianity among people living in parts of the world where Christianity is absent, or at least not the dominant religion. Of course, 'Christianity' meant something different in modernist circles than in orthodoxy: while in orthodoxy it centred on the notion that Jesus Christ saves souls from eternal damnation, among modernists Christianity was about the principles of life expressed in the spirit of Jesus of Nazareth. Conducting foreign missions accordingly was problematic among the latter. If it is not necessary for people to accept Jesus as Christ, did it still make sense for modernists to engage in missionary activities?⁸ If this question is answered in the affirmative, how should modernists give shape to foreign missions? They held that the biblical texts were meant to convey certain principles

5 [F.W.B. van Bell in:] 'De 16e Nederlandsche Protestantenvbond', *De Hervorming* 1888–44 (3 November 1888), 174.

6 C.F.A. Zernike, "De Hervorming" in debat', *Ibid.* 1891–06 (7 February 1891), 21–22, here 22. [The author is erroneously referred to as 'F.A. Zernike'.]

7 A.W. van Wijk, 'Wat is de beste wijze om onze beginselen tot het volk te brengen?', *Ibid.* 1900–45 (10 November 1900), 345–346, here 346.

8 Herderscheê, *De modern-godsdienstige richting in Nederland*, 379.

of life rather than to be accepted in their literal sense. But were non-Christians intellectually capable of distinguishing between the contextual form and the actual content of those texts? If not, was introducing them to Christianity not then rather an infringement of the free development of their religious life?⁹ One could have a Protestant, and hence Christian, spirit without identifying as a Christian, indeed without having heard of Jesus. Should modernists not then be confident that religious life among those whom they referred to as ‘pagans’ would ultimately evolve in a ‘Christian’ direction on its own accord?

Next to considerations such as these, there was another reason for foreign missions to be problematic in modernist circles. The discussion on foreign missions among modernists revolved around their involvement in the NZG. This missionary society, founded in 1797, was formally interdenominational, yet “linked in people’s minds, and in its membership, to the Dutch Reformed Church.”¹⁰ Before the 1940s, the Dutch Reformed Church did not concern itself with foreign missions directly; rather, its members were active in nondenominational missionary corporations.¹¹ When, in the nineteenth century, first the *Groninger* or *evangelische* movement and later the modernist movement emerged, orthodox Protestants became increasingly dissatisfied with the NZG: in their eyes, this missionary society did not distance itself enough from those movements. As a result, as of the 1850s, separate orthodox missionary societies were founded.¹² Modernists, on the other hand, got the feeling that the NZG was eager to receive their financial support, but did not allow them to play an active role in its activities.¹³ During NZG executive board elections, for

9 As Boone writes: “Many modernists [...] regarded foreign missions to conflict with the principle of individual freedom as well as with the tolerance and love that formed the quintessence of the Gospel.” Quoted from: A.Th. Boone, ‘Moderne zendelingen 1850-1885’, *Documentatieblad voor de Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse Zending en Overzeese Kerken* IV.2 (1997), 22-40, here 22. See also: G. de Leeuw, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Afblijven!’, *De Hervorming* 1910-45 (5 November 1910), 358; ‘Kerknieuws – Zending’, *Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant* LXVII.307 (5 November 1910), evening paper A, 1.

10 R.S. Kipp, *The Early Years of a Dutch Colonial Mission. The Karo Field* (Ann Arbor 1990), 28.

11 The Dutch Reformed Church coordinated missionary activities under its auspices during the Second World War, establishing a permanent *Raad voor de Zending der Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk* (Mission Council of the Dutch Reformed Church) in 1951. See: J. van de Wal, *Een aanvechtbare en onzekere situatie. De Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk en Nieuw-Guinea 1949-1962* (Hilversum 2006), 43.

12 *Ibid.*; Th. van den End, *De Nederlandse Zendingsvereniging in West-Java, 1858-1963. Een bronnenpublicatie* (s.l. 1991), 3.

13 [J.N. Wiersma in:] ‘Binnenland – Alkmaarsche Predikantenvereniging’, *De Hervorming* 1888-33 (18 August 1888), 130-131, here 130.

example, modernists were passed over.¹⁴ Additionally, there was reluctance among modernists to support a society that favoured an interpretation of missions as an endeavour to make people believe in Jesus as Redeemer.¹⁵

3 Discussing Foreign Missions

Foreign missions were therefore generally approached with ambivalence, indifference or even outright rejection in modernist circles. Nonetheless, it was a topic that was frequently brought up for discussion in the modernist press. There were modernists who passionately defended the cause of foreign missions. One of them was S. Hoekstra. At the first assembly of modernist theologians in Amsterdam, held in 1866, he stated that foreign missions should be about “the propagation of truth and justice in a Christian spirit and based on liberal principles,” as well as about spreading civilisation, cultural refinement, and progress. Given those goals, he believed that only modernists were fit to be missionaries. Moreover, Hoekstra thought, only liberal Protestantism truly satisfied humans’ deepest spiritual needs.¹⁶ In the same year, N.C. Balsem, whose brother H.S. Balsem (1833-1903) was a minister in the Dutch East Indies at the time, tried to persuade fellow modernists of the necessity of conducting foreign missions, by speaking about this in terms of the spread of civilisation as well: “we want to uplift the Asian, we want to develop his spiritual life, we want to establish schools, we want to purify his moral sense, enlighten his religious sense, in sum: we want to educate the Asian for God’s and humanity’s sake.”¹⁷ Looking back upon his twelve-year stay as a missionary in the

14 J.N. Wiersma, ‘Binnenland – Waarom niet meer?’, *De Hervorming* 1885-05 (31 January 1885), 18-19, here 19; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Eén onder zes-en-twintig’, *Ibid.* 1896-51 (19 December 1896), 203; A.F.H. Blaauw, ‘Ingezonden stukken – De toekomst van het Nederlandsche Zendinggenootschap’, *Ibid.* 1898-36 (3 September 1898), 145; Cyriacus [B.W. Colenbrander], ‘Uit de kerkelijke wereld’, *Ibid.* 1902-25 (21 June 1902), 195-196; J.N. Wiersma, ‘Het Nederlandsch Zendinggenootschap’, *Ibid.* 1902-26 (28 June 1902), 203.

15 [H.C. Lohr], ‘Het Nederlandsche Zendinggenootschap’, *Ibid.* 1876-15 (13 April 1876), 1-2; A.J.H.W. Brandt, ‘Zending’, *Ibid.* 1883-32 (11 August 1883), 126.

16 S. Hoekstra Bz., ‘De moderne richting en de zending’, *Nieuw en Oud* 1 (1866), 47-67, here 64. See also: Herderscheê, *De modern-godsdienstige richting in Nederland*, 380; Boone, ‘Moderne zendelingen 1850-1885’, 23.

17 N.C. Balsem, *Zoekende liefde. Een woord tot aanbeveling der zending, uitgesproken op de jaarvergadering der onderafdeeling Dragten, den 13 Mei 1866* (Leeuwarden 1866), 24. To quote Kalma, Balsem was “one of the few liberals who advocated foreign missions.” Quoted from: J.J. Kalma, ‘Balsem, Nicolaas Cornelis’, *BLGNP* III, 29.

Indonesian Minahassa peninsula, J.N. Wiersma (1833-1907) voiced the same opinion ten years later.¹⁸ When asked whether Protestants should try to convert 'pagans' to Christianity or to 'humanise' them, he resolutely answered: "both."¹⁹ This might seem a contradiction of Hoekstra's words, but it was actually an endorsement of what Hoekstra had said ten years before. After all, Wiersma did not see any difference between 'Christianising' and 'civilising', as "foreign missions are pedagogy, and everything conflicting with good morals has to be changed."²⁰ A missionary should not set himself up as a "clergyman," but rather as a "natural human being," different from other human beings only to the extent that he should be "a paragon and an example, excelling in decency, devoutness, love and above all humility."²¹ Stories, not only biblical ones, only served to support the moral superiority of values deemed Christian, values that should clearly shine through in the life of the missionary himself.²²

In an anonymous piece, published in *De Hervorming* on 13 April 1876, it was said that raising the level of civilisation of pagans was a precondition without which the principles of Jesus would never be able to take root.²³ Bringing non-Christian peoples into contact with Christianity could not even be done without civilising them, for those principles were ethical by nature. Spreading them thus automatically meant increasing the level of civilisation. What is more, as the Lutheran theologian A.J.H.W. Brandt (1855-1915) affirmed in 1883, *only* Christianity could be truly uplifting.²⁴ That is to say, as a certain 'J.A.S.B.' explained in 1902, *liberal* Christianity. Whereas orthodox Christians were exclusively interested in the *Jenseits*, liberal Christians placed the *Diesseits* at the forefront, this entailing that the former were preoccupied with 'saving souls' for the afterlife, while the latter wanted to improve the lives of 'pagans' in the

18 A review of this retrospective was published in: P. Cool, 'Feuilleton – "Ervaringen gedurende mijn twaalfjarig zendingsleven"', *De Hervorming* 1877-21 (26 May 1877), 1-2; 1877-22 (2 June 1877), 1-3. For Wiersma and the controversy his modernist persuasion caused within the NZG, see: A.Th. Boone, "In het belang van zedelijkheid en recht". J.N. Wiersma (1833-1907) als modernistisch zendeling en hulpprediker te Ratahan (Minahassa); in: Th. van den End et al. (eds.), *Twee eeuwen Nederlandse zending, 1797-1997. Twaalf opstellen* (Zoetermeer 1997), 91-113.

19 J.N. Wiersma, *Ervaringen gedurende mijn twaalfjarig zendingsleven* (Rotterdam 1876), 40.

20 *Ibid.*, 114. In Wiersma's words, missionaries were "pioneers of civilisation."

21 *Ibid.*, 40.

22 *Ibid.*, 42; Boone, 'Moderne zendelingen 1850-1885', 33.

23 [H.C. Lohr], 'Het Nederlandsche Zendelinggenootschap', *De Hervorming* 1876-15 (13 April 1876), 1-2.

24 A.J.H.W. Brandt, 'Zending', *Ibid.* 1883-32 (11 August 1883), 126; 1883-33 (18 August 1883), 130.

here and now.²⁵ As becomes clear from all of these examples, liberal Christianity and civilisation were seen as two sides of the same coin: the one could not be separated from the other.²⁶

At least among old-school modernists, this persuasion was firmly rooted in an outlook on human history in general, and the history of religion in particular, as a linear, evolutionary process towards the ultimate fulfilment of the Kingdom of God. Human history showed that every era was an improvement of the era preceding it. The history of religion was read accordingly. Out of 'primitive' paganism, legalistic Judaism had developed, which, in turn, had given birth to an ethically superior Christianity. In Western Christianity in the early modern period, Roman Catholicism had been surpassed by Protestantism, which rejected clerical hierarchy and the veneration of saints, but was still 'Roman' in the sense that it was highly dogmatic and did not question supernaturalism.²⁷ Ultimately, the contemporary era had brought modernism into being, which sought to eliminate this Roman 'leaven' from Protestantism. As mentioned, both in the nineteenth and in the early twentieth century, there was a latent sentiment among modernists that a universal religion of mankind would ultimately (and could only) develop out of liberal Protestantism, a religion in which all humans would be spiritually united and would worship God as the 'ubiquity', which links together all human beings as well as nature and mankind.²⁸

25 J.A.S.B., 'Ingezonden stukken', *De Hervorming* 1902-02 (11 January 1902), 13-14; J.N. Wiersma, 'Ingezonden stukken – Zending', *Ibid.* 1902-02 (11 January 1902), 14-15, here 14. B.D. Eerdmans had previously spoken similarly. See: B.D. Eerdmans, 'Ingezonden stukken – De zending', *Ibid.* 1901-52 (28 December 1901), 413-414.

26 Still in 1917, De Graaf contended that the principles – *not* the doctrines or traditions – of Christianity were those of civilisation itself; to civilise, he argued, necessarily meant to Christianise. See: H.T. de Graaf, *Beschaving en zending* (Haarlem 1917), 29.

27 And, as Meyboom stressed in 1878, because the sixteenth-century Reformers had not renounced Roman Catholic ecclesiology: in Protestantism, the 'Roman' practice of rejecting ritualistic, ceremonial, and doctrinal reforms once these rituals, ceremonies, and doctrines had been set in regulations and confessions of faith was maintained. According to Meyboom, Roman Catholicism corresponded to an 'infant stage' of intellectual development. Moreover, the Roman Catholic Church tried everything it could to keep its members at this infant stage. See: H.U. Meyboom, 'De kerk der toekomst', *Onze Godsdienst-prediking* 11.21 (1878), 353-372, here 361-365.

28 E.g.: Balsem, *Zoekende liefde*, 24; H. Bakels, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – De komende godsdienst-vórm of Kerkelijke perspectieven', *De Hervorming* 1918-32 (10 August 1918), 125-126; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, 'Hoofdartikel – De leuze "Los van het christendom", o.a. naar aanleiding van Wannée's "Religieuze levens- en wereldbeschouwing"', *Ibid.* 1921-44 (5 November 1921), 345-347, here 346. Van Senden argued that if a universal religion were ever to come into being, it could basically be nothing else than "radical liberal

Although old-school modernists rejected the 'absoluteness' of Christianity, in the sense that they did not consider the Christian religion to be the exclusive path to salvation, they did believe that there was a difference in degree between Christianity and other religions.²⁹ On the ladder of evolution, Christianity stood at the top – with modernism on the highest rung –, animism at the bottom, and religions such as Buddhism and Islam somewhere in between.³⁰ Modernist advocates of foreign missions accordingly argued that the cause of modernism was the cause of human progress. Why, they asked, should Dutch modernists restrict their endeavours to advancing this cause to their own country? What could justify a distinction between near neighbours, living in their vicinity, and far neighbours, many of whom had never even heard of Christianity at all? Did the latter not deserve to be uplifted just as much as the former?³¹ Champions of foreign missions therefore stood up against those, such as H.W.Ph.E. van den Bergh van Eysinga, who deemed it premature to civilise non-Christians on the other side of the world as long as there were many poverty-stricken and spiritually underdeveloped people in the Netherlands who were dying to share in the fruits of progress.³²

Christianity." Yet the chance that it would come into being had decreased over the years: due to the influence of right-wing modernism, contemporary Dutch liberal Protestantism could hardly be called radical – on the contrary, it "seeks an alliance with forms of Christianity that are even more tradition-bound and less congruent with the idea of a universal religion [than itself]. In this regard, the so-called turn to the right in modernist circles is simply disastrous." Quoted from: G.H. van Senden, *Christendom en universele religie* (Arnhem 1927), 46–47.

- 29 H.S. Balsem, 'De zending en de moderne richting', *Geloof en leven* XII (1878), 165–187, here 179; H.S. Balsem, *Zendingsrede, uitgesproken den 28^{sten} Mei 1891 in het kerkgebouw der Herv. Gemeente te Helmond, ter gelegenheid van de jaarvergadering der Afdeling 's-Hertogenbosch van het Ned. Zendelingennootschap* ('s-Hertogenbosch [1891]), 6; Herderscheë, *De modern-godsdienstige richting in Nederland*, 379; Boone, 'Moderne zendelingen 1850–1885', 38.
- 30 Compared to Christianity, Islam, for example, was seen as ethically and intellectually inferior. See, e.g.: Balsem, 'De zending en de moderne richting', 175–176; J.C. Schagen van Soelen, 'Feuilleton – De Allgem. Ev. Protest. Missions-Verein en de zending', *De Hervorming* 1886–22 (29 May 1886), 85–87, here 86; Balsem, *Zendingsrede*, 8; J. Herderscheë, 'Mohammed en zijn godsdienst', *De Hervorming* 1899–08 (25 February 1899), 29–30, here 30. See also: Boone, 'Moderne zendelingen 1850–1885', 39.
- 31 E.J.W. Koch, 'Ingezonden stukken', *De Hervorming* 1877–03 (20 January 1877), 3–4.
- 32 H.W.Ph.E. van den Bergh van Eysinga, 'Een repliek', *Ibid.* 1894–34 (25 August 1894), 134–135. Many years later, J.H. de Vries (1860–1938), a Dutch Reformed minister who had served several congregations belonging to the *Protestantsche Kerk in Nederlandsch-Indië* (Protestant Church in the Dutch East Indies or PKNI), made a similar argument: before engaging in foreign missions, modernists should try to make Europe 'more Christian'. See: J.H. de Vries, 'Zijn wij gerechtigd tot zending?', *Teekenen des Tijds* XIX (1917), 50–56, here 55.

In contrast to orthodox Protestants, who wanted to 'indoctrinate' non-Christians with their own dogmas, and *evangelischen*, for whom 'education' meant filling 'pagans' with awe for the person of Jesus Christ and teaching those pagans how to do as he did, modernists used the word 'education' in a missionary context to refer to their endeavour to turn humans into individuals.³³ Non-Christians should not be taught how to accept Jesus as Redeemer or how to 'mimic' the life of Jesus, but should instead be taught how they could internalise the principles on which Jesus's religious and social ethics were based.³⁴ Non-Christians should be guided to become *individuals*, possessing a *personal* faith and able to take full mental and material *responsibility* for their own lives. In response to modernists who felt that foreign missions should be confined to the founding of schools, Wiersma stated that this would not be enough. If children attended a school founded by a missionary, but stayed under the influence of "fanatical [pagan and Mohammedan] priests, credulous parents, and unreasonable people" outside of school, then "it would be impossible [for the school] to breed human beings who, even just a little bit, live up to what it means to be 'human' in the full sense of the word."³⁵

Men such as Wiersma kept emphasising the inextricable relation between Christianity and civilisation. As such, completely in line with the optimistic and complacent outlook on life and firm belief in progress that were so characteristic of old-school modernism, they rather uncritically saw their own culture as the best there was. Yet old-school modernism came to be severely criticised when malcontentism began to manifest itself around 1900. Moreover, socialism, which vehemently agitated against capitalism, began to take root among modernists around the same time. The previously-mentioned arguments against foreign missions were still put forward, but now, a new one came to be voiced as well: some modernists openly questioned whether the dissemination of the 'Christian' civilisation was as salutary as champions of foreign missions claimed it to be.

G. de Leeuw probably expressed the sharpest condemnation of foreign missions in modernist circles in the autumn of 1910. While repeating the objection that foreign missions infringed on the free development of religious life, he also denounced the self-satisfaction with which (liberal) Christians looked at their own culture. After all, "foreign missions open the door for all the miseries of European 'civilisation' – although against their intentions, missions carry

33 J.A. Beijerman, 'Het Nederlandsche Zendinggenootschap', *De Hervorming* 1890-33 (16 August 1890), 129-130.

34 E.g.: J. Hooykaas Herderscheê, "'Maar al te dikwijls'", *Ibid.* 1874-07 (12 February 1874), 2-3.

35 Wiersma, *Ervaringen gedurende mijn twaalfjarig zendingsleven*, 19.

with them gin, opium, syphilis, and bayonets as a sting in the tail, and this should make them as a highly questionable endeavour in the eyes of every right-minded person.”³⁶ C. Hille Ris Lambers, an advocate of foreign missions, responded by rhetorically asking why modernists should still regard Christianity as something suitable for themselves if it really were unworthy to be spread.³⁷ What is more, according to Hille Ris Lambers, the biggest consumers of opium and gin were non-Christian natives, while the spread of venereal diseases was in large part a result of the sexual permissiveness of these same natives. The first Europeans with whom indigenous peoples in the non-Christian world came into contact were usually missionaries, who were, on the whole, ethically more refined than other Europeans. How then, Hille Ris Lambers asked, could De Leeuw hold that foreign missions led to degradation? Was modernism not based on the notion of the ‘power of personality’, on the conviction that social interaction between spiritually highly developed and spiritually less developed individuals is beneficial to the latter?³⁸ Yet, De Leeuw’s polemic did not die down. Twelve years later, for example, P. Eldering criticised the link between Christianity and civilisation that had long been taken for granted, as the so-called ‘civilised’ and Christian world had given rise to a war that was “more atrocious than any war ever waged before – a war accepted as a necessary evil, and glorified or sanctified as a God-given order by the official ‘Christian’ churches and their servants.” Foreign missions, he concluded, were harmful as long as Christians did not reject capitalism, the ‘evil’ responsible for the outbreak of the First World War.³⁹ Evidently, modernists such as De Leeuw and Eldering were not convinced about the value of foreign missions.

In the modernist movement, there were three men who were particularly eager to defend the cause of foreign missions:⁴⁰ J.N. Wiersma and H.S. Balsem, who have already been mentioned, and M. Joustra (1871-1926), who worked

36 G. de Leeuw, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Afblijven!’, *De Hervorming* 1910-45 (5 November 1910), 358. See also: ‘Kerknieuws – Zending’, *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* LXVII.307 (5 November 1910), evening paper A, 1.

37 C. Hille Ris Lambers, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Afblijven!’, *De Hervorming* 1910-44 (29 October 1910), 351.

38 C. Hille Ris Lambers, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Zending’, *Ibid.* 1910-47 (19 November 1910), 374.

39 P. Eldering, ‘Ingezonden – De zending en wij’, *Ibid.* 1922-29 (22 July 1922), 230.

40 Boone mentions, next to Wiersma, two other missionaries with modernist sympathies: T.A.F. van der Valk (1828-1874) and S.E. Harthoorn (1831-1883). These two did not play any role whatsoever regarding the popularisation of foreign missions in the Dutch modernist movement in the period under study here. Harthoorn came to the conclusion that indigenous Indonesians were not yet intellectually developed enough to understand and internalise the religious principles of Jesus, while Van der Valk even became a freethinker.

as a missionary on behalf of the NZG in Northern Sumatra between 1894 and 1905.⁴¹ Balsem, who had served several Protestant congregations in the East Indies between 1864 and 1874, used the fact that Wiersma had been a missionary from 1862 until 1874 as an argument in favour of foreign missions. "Wiersma," he argued, "is the living proof that the [modernist] movement can not only contribute to the Dutch Missionary Society by giving money to it."⁴² As long as it accepted modernists like Wiersma in its midst, E.J.W. Koch similarly argued, modernists should not refrain from offering their services to the NZG.⁴³

This argument was connected to another.⁴⁴ Foreign missions, their modernist champions reasoned, was indispensable for refuting the orthodox accusation, mentioned in chapter 3, that modernists were not entitled to call themselves 'Christians'. Modernists' lack of enthusiasm for foreign missions, Koch warned in 1877, only confirmed orthodox Protestants in this conviction. Therefore, "we have to double our zeal and demonstrate that those who claim that 'modernists are nothing more than iconoclasts, only interested in demol-

See: Boone, "In het belang van zedelijkheid en recht", 91; Boone, 'Moderne zendelingen 1850-1885', 24-32. De Jong mentions that the following three assistant ministers trained by the NZG were modernists as well: M.H. Schippers (1853-1916), J. ten Hove (1857-1938), and J.H.W. van der Miesen (1873-?). See: Chr.G.F. de Jong, 'Een verloren generatie zendelingen in de Molukken in de negentiende eeuw. De "vijftigers"', *Documentatieblad voor de Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse Zending en Overzeese Kerken* VII.1 (2000), 24-46, here 42.

41 For a detailed account of Joustra's stay in the Batak region, written by his son, see: H.W. Joustra, *Een vrijzinnige zendeling in de Bataklanden 1894-1905. Voordracht gehouden op zondagmiddag 23 september 1984, in het Jeugd-gebouw te Odoorn, in het kader van de 34^{ste} "Zwinglibondconferentie"* (s.l. [1984]) [unpublished manuscript].

42 H.S. Balsem, 'Voorstel', *De Hervorming* 1880-01 (3 January 1880), 2-3, here 3.

43 Balsem, 'De zending en de moderne richting', 181; E.J.W. Koch, 'Ingezonden stukken', *De Hervorming* 1877-03 (20 January 1877), 3-4, here 4.

44 However, in the 1880s, Wiersma stated that he could understand why many modernists were not willing to support the NZG – though not sharing this unwillingness himself –, since there were no modernists active as missionaries on behalf of the NZG at the time. See: [J.N. Wiersma in:] 'Nederlandsche Protestantenvbond – Nijmegen', *Ibid.* 1885-08 (21 February 1885), 30. In the year in which Wiersma published his article, there were, however, at least two modernists serving the PKNI who were trained by the NZG: Schippers and Ten Hove. See: Chr.G.F. de Jong, *De Protestantse Kerk in de Midden-Molukken 1803-1900. Een bronnenpublicatie* II. 1854-1900 (Leiden 2006), 567-568, 620. Around 1900, at least four men who sympathised with the modernist movement were working as ministers in the PKNI or as missionaries on behalf of the NZG in the Dutch East Indies: Schippers (in the PKNI from 1880 until 1902), Ten Hove (in the PKNI from 1883 until 1911), Van der Miesen (from 1898 until 1911; on behalf of the NZG between 1898 and 1903; afterwards in the PKNI) and Joustra (on behalf of the NZG from 1894 until 1905). For the first three, see: *Ibid.*, 640-641, 644. For Joustra, see: Joustra, *Een vrijzinnige zendeling in de Bataklanden*.

ishing [existing religious life]', are spreading lies and slanderous talk."⁴⁵ Yet as Wiersma noted eight years later, there was a strong tendency in modernist circles to think that foreign missions could, at least for the moment, best be left to orthodoxy, either because it was assumed that non-Christians were intellectually incapable of understanding a modernist interpretation of Christianity, or because foreign missions in themselves were believed to be inextricably interwoven with a supernaturalist interpretation of Christianity and hence a hindrance to the free development of religious life.⁴⁶

Given such sentiments, champions of foreign missions maintained, it was unfair to attribute the relatively low number of modernists actively involved with the NZG solely to the missionary association itself. True, the NZG had not categorically repudiated modernist beliefs in the 1860s – causing some moderately orthodox Protestants like D. Chantepie de la Saussaye (1818-1874), one of the most influential *ethische* theologians, to follow the example of their confessionalist co-religionists by dissociating themselves from the NZG⁴⁷ –, but the group's chief commissioners no longer tacitly agreed among themselves around 1880 about not admitting anyone with modernist views to the NZG's missionary training school.⁴⁸ On the other hand, the widespread indifference towards, and prejudice against, foreign missions among modernists were just as responsible for the lack of modernists among NZG board members.⁴⁹ To a large extent, it was the fault of liberal Protestants themselves that they failed to exert influence on the missionary association.⁵⁰ As modernist champions of foreign missions stressed, modernists should make use of the opportunity that the NZG, the only Dutch missionary organisation without a specific doc-

45 E.J.W. Koch, 'Ingezonden stukken', *De Hervorming* 1877-03 (20 January 1877), 3-4, here 4.

46 As noted in: J.N. Wiersma, 'Binnenland – Waarom niet meer?', *Ibid.* 1885-05 (31 January 1885), 18-19. See also: Boone, "In het belang van zedelijkheid en recht", 112.

47 D. Chantepie de la Saussaye, *Waarom ik het Nederlandsche Zendinggenootschap heb verlaten. Verantwoording aan mijne gemeente* (Rotterdam 1864).

48 De Jong, *De Protestantse Kerk in de Midden-Molukken* 1803-1900, 567. For a detailed account of the complicated relationship between the NZG and modernism, see: A.J. van den Berg, *Kerkelijke strijd en zendingsorganisatie. De scheuring in het Nederlands Zendinggenootschap rond het midden van de negentiende eeuw* (Zoetermeer 1997).

49 Orthodox Protestants, on the contrary, felt that liberal tendencies influenced the NZG too much, which was the chief reason for them to found missionary organisations of their own. See, e.g.: I.H. Enklaar, *Kom over en help ons! Twaalf opstellen over de Nederlandse zending in de negentiende eeuw* (The Hague 1981), 85.

50 J.A. Beijerman, 'Binnenland – Nederl. Zendinggenootschap', *De Hervorming* 1883-30 (28 July 1883), 118-119, here 118; J.N. Wiersma, 'Binnenland – Waarom niet meer?', *Ibid.* 1885-05 (31 January 1885), 18-19, here 19; J.N. Wiersma, 'De zending in het licht van het Congres van Chicago', *Ibid.* 1894-36 (8 September 1894), 142-143, here 143.

trinal basis,⁵¹ offered them to shape foreign missions in accordance with their own principles, and should actively try to become better represented at the administrative level of the NZG.⁵²

Of course, the NZG offered that same opportunity to non-modernists. Wiersma admitted this, and also acknowledged that modernists were at best only tolerated in the NZG.⁵³ Yet, if modernists really wanted to fulfil their vocation to contribute to the realisation of the Kingdom of God, they had no other choice but to support the NZG. Wiersma and others recognised that it was not feasible to found a missionary association based solely on modernist principles: apart from the preference given in modernist circles to associations with a 'general', 'neutral' basis, the objections on grounds of principle to foreign missions as such would hinder such a modernist missionary association from attracting enough support to be viable.⁵⁴ Besides, modernists had the right to be in the NZG – even more, since its founders had been “men of progress,” it could be argued that modernists, seeing themselves as the most progressive Protestants in the present age, were their legitimate heirs.⁵⁵ Just as those who urged Reformed liberals to fight for their rights within the Dutch Reformed Church rather than to give up fighting and join another church denomination, those advocating foreign missions called on their fellow modernists not to reconcile themselves to the dominance of (moderate) orthodoxy in the NZG. The association would benefit from a stronger modernist involvement. Liberal

51 In the 1890s, Wiersma noted a more 'liberal' atmosphere in the NZG. See, e.g.: J.N. Wiersma, 'Het Nederlandsch Zendeling-Genootschap', *De Hervorming* 1894-29 (21 July 1894), 113-114; J.N. Wiersma, 'Het Nederlandsche Zendeling-genootschap', *Ibid.* 1897-02 (9 January 1897), 6.

52 J.N. Wiersma, 'Binnenland – Vergadering van 't Ned. Zend.-Genootschap', *Ibid.* 1898-30 (23 July 1898), 120; M. Joustra, 'Ingezonden stukken', *Ibid.* 1902-12 (22 March 1902), 93-94, here 94.

53 [J.N. Wiersma in:] 'Binnenland – Alkmaarsche Predikantenver.', *Ibid.* 1888-33 (18 August 1888), 130-131, here 130.

54 K., 'Ingezonden stukken – Ter overweging aan het hoofdbestuur van het Ned. Zend. Genootschap', *Ibid.* 1888-22 (2 June 1888), 88; J.N. Wiersma, 'Het Nederlandsche Zendelinggenootschap', *Ibid.* 1905-21 (27 May 1905), 165; M. Joustra, 'Ingezonden stukken – Zending', *Ibid.* 1910-25 (18 June 1910), 197-198, here 197; M. Joustra, 'De bond en Indië – Kunnen wij voor Indië iets doen?', *Ibid.* 1925-06 (7 February 1925), 43-45, here 44; [A.E.F. Junod], 'Bonds- en ander nieuws – Rectificatie', *Ibid.* 1925-07 (14 February 1925), 54; M. Joustra, *De beteekenis der zending, toegelicht voor vrijzinnig-godsdienstigen* (Baarn 1913), 33; 'Kerknieuws – Moderne theologen', *Algemeen Handelsblad* xciv.30196 (7 April 1921), morning paper, 6.

55 Chantepie de la Saussaye, *Waarom ik het Nederlandsche Zendelinggenootschap heb verlaten*, 21-23. Chantepie de la Saussaye did not agree with this line of reasoning. See: *Ibid.*, 23-25.

Protestantism, to quote Joustra, could serve as a leaven within the NZG, “steadily purifying its methods and helping to establish more clarity and veracity at the expense of the half-heartedness currently existing [in its midst].”⁵⁶

The modernist movement itself would also benefit from such a stronger involvement with the NZG, its advocates asserted. It would enliven congregational life in the Netherlands,⁵⁷ or, to quote Wiersma, foreign missions “have an inspirational and sanctifying effect on the community that engages in them.”⁵⁸ Conducting foreign missions would force modernists to articulate the essence of their religious beliefs in straightforward and positive terms, something with which they, as noted in chapter 3, intensely struggled. This, Joustra maintained, would serve as a foil for the richness of liberal Protestantism,⁵⁹ and would remind modernists that the Gospel “is an invaluable treasure, an inexhaustible source of spiritual power, comfort and peace.”⁶⁰ Foreign missions enriched and deepened the religious life of Christians in the Netherlands, and would stimulate modernists to intensify their aim to ‘Christianise’ the society in which they themselves were living. By being confronted with ‘pagans’ abroad, Joustra believed, modernists would become more aware of the fact that there were still many spiritual ‘heathens’ and materially needy persons living in their own society as well.⁶¹ Foreign missions were also a source of inspiration in a different way: they fostered ecumenism. The 1910 Edinburgh World Missionary Conference had proven that denominational walls were no obstacles in matters of shared interest. At such gatherings, liberal Protestants were not exactly welcomed with open arms, but this, Joustra believed, would definitely change. If modernists themselves were to take a keener interest in mission-related affairs, then orthodox moderates would be less reluctant to accept them in their midst.⁶²

56 ‘Kerknieuws – Moderne theologen’, *Algemeen Handelsblad* xciv.30196 (7 April 1921), morning paper, 6.

57 J.N. Wiersma, ‘Het Nederl. Zending-Genootschap’, *De Hervorming* 1902-51 (20 December 1902), 402-403, here 403.

58 [J.N. Wiersma in:] ‘Binnenland – Alkmaarsche Predikantenvereeniging’, *Ibid.* 1888-33 (18 August 1888), 130-131, here 130. See also: [J.N. Wiersma in:] ‘Binnenland – Alkmaarsche Predikantenvereeniging’, *Ibid.* 1888-21 (26 May 1888), 83.

59 ‘Kerknieuws – Moderne theologen’, *Algemeen Handelsblad* xciv.30196 (7 April 1921), morning paper, 6.

60 Joustra, *De beteekenis der zending*, 31. As early as 1876, H.C. Lohr noted in *De Hervorming* that foreign missions are “a source of enhancement of [modernists’] own spiritual lives.” Quoted from: [H.C. Lohr], ‘Het Nederlandsche Zendinggenootschap’, *De Hervorming* 1876-15 (13 April 1876), 1-2, here 2.

61 Joustra, *De beteekenis der zending*, 32. See also: Balsem, ‘De zending en de moderne richting’, 176.

62 Joustra, *De beteekenis der zending*, 32.

What is more, foreign missions, their modernist advocates asserted, had a positive effect on Western society at large. Missionaries were bridges between indigenous Asian and African cultures and the 'civilised', Christian world. By taking part in the daily lives, festivities, rituals and ceremonies of the indigenous communities, missionaries would be able to study the beliefs, customs, linguistic particularities, and social norms of these peoples in greater detail. Subsequently, they could turn their findings into encyclopaedias, monographs, dictionaries, grammars, and maps. As a result, foreign missions could make major contributions to fields as diverse as comparative religious studies, cultural anthropology, ethnology, geography, and philology. Foreign missions highly enriched human knowledge. Modernist champions of foreign missions were not the only ones making this argument,⁶³ but they, knowing how much value liberal Protestants placed on the augmentation of scientific and scholarly knowledge, hoped it might convince modernists of the intellectual benefits of missionary work. Joustra, for example, used it as one of his clinching arguments in his 1913 brochure *De beteekenis der zending, toegelicht voor vrijzinnig-godsdienstigen* (*The Importance of Foreign Missions, Explained to Religious Liberals*), which was published on behalf of the NPB.⁶⁴

In the case of the Dutch East Indies, the mission territory of the NZG, foreign missions also had political implications. Although its modernist advocates did not want it to be controlled or supervised by the Dutch government either in The Hague or the colonial authorities in Batavia, they did want the state to facilitate those missions. This was a point of view that they had in common with Kuiper's Anti-Revolutionary Party.⁶⁵ In 1896, while noting that political liberals were generally indifferent on the matter, Wiersma even praised Kuiper for urging the government to amend all laws related to the East Indies in such a way that Christianity could be spread more easily there. Muslim preachers, for example, could travel around without restriction, whereas Christian missionaries were only allowed to settle in, or travel through, the East Indies if

63 See, e.g.: N. Poulain (J. Riemens and J.J. van Toorenenbergen eds.), *De evangelische zending als getuige van de Goddelijkheid des Christendoms* (Utrecht 1868), 280-284.

64 Joustra, *De beteekenis der zending*, 29-31. A review of this brochure was published in: A.S. Carpentier Alting, 'De modernen en de zending', *De Hervorming* 1913-21 (24 May 1913), 161-163. Thirty years earlier, A.J.H.W. Brandt had accentuated the scholarly significance of foreign missions, by calling missionaries "pioneers of geography and ethnology, often discoverers of new [natural] resources, trailblazers of new trade routes." Quoted from: A.J.H.W. Brandt, 'Zending', *Ibid.* 1883-32 (11 August 1883), 126.

65 J.A.H. Verkuyt, 'De spanning tussen westers imperialisme en kolonialisme en zending in het tijdperk van de "ethische koloniale politiek"', in: J. de Bruijn (ed.), *Een land nog niet in kaart gebracht. Aspecten van het protestants-christelijk leven in Nederland in de jaren 1880-1940* (Amsterdam 1987), 163-216, here 182.

the governor-general in Batavia permitted them to do so.⁶⁶ It was, as Wiersma stressed, to the advantage of the government itself to facilitate Christian missionary activities, as Christianity helped safeguard political stability in the East Indies.⁶⁷ Balsem agreed: the hearts, the houses and the communities of indigenous Christians looked “rather different from and better than” those of Islamic and Buddhist natives; Christians behaved as decent, law-abiding civilians.⁶⁸ The Dutch government should therefore take a more active interest in ‘civilising’ its East Indian subjects – and hence in foreign missions, for example by generously subsidising missionary-founded schools. These schools, Joustra admitted, did not have the same amount of resources or the same number of (qualified) teachers at their disposal as the official government-run schools, but they attracted and reached more pupils than their state-owned counterparts.⁶⁹ Moreover, the expansion of Christian-based education was for the government’s own benefit, as Christianity, contrary to the Indies’ indigenous faiths, enhanced the self-respect of the indigenous populations; “the development of one’s sense of dignity,” as an article in the Roman Catholic newspaper *De Tijd* that was quoted with approval in *De Hervorming* averred, was “the best safeguard against social wrongs and the undermining of the colonial power.”⁷⁰

In other words, *liberal* Christianity could enhance the self-respect of the indigenous populations of the East Indies. While orthodox Protestant and Roman Catholic missionaries did not help promote non-Christians’ sense of self-esteem, modernist missionaries fully respected the intrinsic value of every human being, and tried to liberate non-Christian natives from the chains of ‘rigid’ religious beliefs and ‘unethical’ cultural habits,⁷¹ these others simply wanted to bind those natives in new chains, the chains of dogmatism and clericalism. Foreign missions based on liberal Protestant principles could counterbalance such activities of orthodox Protestant and Roman Catholic missionaries.

66 J.N. Wiersma, ‘Zending’, *De Hervorming* 1896-52 (26 December 1896), 206-207, here 206.

67 J.N. Wiersma, ‘Over Indische belangen’, *Ibid.* 1900-47 (24 November 1900), 363.

68 H.S. Balsem, ‘De modernen en het Nederlandsch Zendelinggenootschap’, *Bibliotheek van Moderne Theologie en Letterkunde* VI (second series) (1886), 149-161, here 158. See also: E.F. Kruijff, *Geschiedenis van het Nederlandsche Zendelinggenootschap en zijne zendingsposten* (Groningen 1894), 172. See also: [H.S. Balsem in:] ‘Binnenland – Eindhoven’, *De Hervorming* 1879-26 (28 June 1879), 2.

69 Joustra, *De beteekenis der zending*, 24-26. See also: J.N. Wiersma, ‘Zending’, *De Hervorming* 1896-52 (26 December 1896), 206-207, here 207.

70 Quoted in: ‘Binnenland – Christen-inlanders’, *Ibid.* 1897-33 (14 August 1897), 131.

71 Joustra, *De beteekenis der zending*, 23; C. Hille Ris Lambers, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Zending’, *De Hervorming* 1910-47 (19 November 1910), 374. See also: Balsem, ‘De zending en de moderne richting’, 171.

Whereas missionaries working on behalf of the NZG, orthodox and doctrinal as they might be, at least had the intention of delivering the natives “from a state of ignorance and immorality” and to “steadily civilise them,” their Catholic equivalents were preoccupied with “baptising whomever they could lay their hands on, at ungodly hours.”⁷² The latter did not even hesitate to re-baptise natives who only recently converted to Protestantism.⁷³ Uninterested in natives’ spiritual development,⁷⁴ they only cared about proselytising, preferably at the expense of the spread of Protestantism.⁷⁵ This was, for example, the case in the Minahassa. Years before a whole series of articles on the presence of Roman Catholic missionaries in this part of the East Indies was published in *De Hervorming*,⁷⁶ Wiersma urged his fellow modernists to speak out against Catholic ‘usurpation’ of a Protestant mission site. In his 1876 ‘memoirs’ dealing with his life as a missionary in the 1860s and early 1870s, he dedicated no less than thirty-eight pages, nearly a sixth of his entire book, to his “struggle against Rome.”⁷⁷ He gave an extensive account of the vicious practice of a Roman Catholic priest – a certain Father De Vries, as Wiersma would later reveal⁷⁸ – who managed to ‘Catholicise’ dozens of recent converts to Protestantism.⁷⁹ Ten years later, in 1886, Wiersma informed the readership of *De Hervorming* that itinerant Catholic missionaries were still trying to ‘conquer’ the Minahassa in the name of their faith. He blamed the colonial authorities

72 [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘Binnenland – De roomsch-katholieke propaganda in de Minahassa’, *De Hervorming* 1883-22 (2 June 1883), 86.

73 M.H. Schippers, ‘Binnenland – R.C.-zendelingen in de Minahassa’, *Ibid.* 1883-08 (24 February 1883), 31; Balsem, *Zendingsrede*, 12; J.N. Wiersma, ‘Minahassa-toestanden’, *De Hervorming* 1899-06 (11 February 1899), 21.

74 [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘Binnenland – De roomsch-katholieke propaganda in de Minahassa’, *Ibid.* 1883-22 (2 June 1883), 86; ‘Buitenland – De protestantsche zending aangevalen’, *Ibid.* 1890-35 (30 August 1890), 139-140, here 139.

75 [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Over de Minahassa’, *Ibid.* 1886-32 (7 August 1886), 128; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Nog eens: de Minahassa’, *Ibid.* 1899-32 (12 August 1899), 134.

76 E.g.: J.A.Th. Krol, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1898-38 (17 September 1898), 153; W. van Lingen, ‘De Minahassa’, *Ibid.* (22 July 1899), 122; J.N. Wiersma, ‘Aanvang der roomsche propaganda in de Minahassa’, *Ibid.* 1899-33 (19 August 1899), 137; J.H. Balsem, ‘De intrrede van Rome in de Minahassa’, *Ibid.* 1899-33 (19 August 1899), 137.

77 Wiersma, *Ervaringen gedurende mijn twaalfjarig zendingsleven*, 148-185. See also: Balsem, ‘De zending en de moderne richting’, 166.

78 J.N. Wiersma, ‘De roomsche missie in de Minahassa’, *De Hervorming* 1886-34 (21 August 1886), 136-137, here 136. The priest in question was the Jesuit Johannes de Vries (1823-1887). See: K.A. Steenbrink, *Catholics in Indonesia, 1808-1942. A Documented History I. A Modest Recovery, 1808-1900* (Leiden 2003), 481-482.

79 Wiersma, *Ervaringen gedurende mijn twaalfjarig zendingsleven*, 181.

in Batavia for sanctioning the position that the Roman Catholic Church had arrogated to itself in these territories.⁸⁰ If modernists continued to withhold their support for the NZG, Wiersma implied, they would have the expansion of Rome's power on their conscience, as the NZG would not then be able to intensify its activities to neutralise that expansion in the Minahassa.

To quote C. Hille Ris Lambers, modernists should not allow orthodox Protestantism to expand its sphere of influence in the East Indies either, as liberal Protestantism was "a greater force of salvation" than orthodoxy⁸¹ – it was the only kind of religion that could *really* enhance the natives' sense of self-worth. After all, more than any other religion, it emphasised the value of the individual personality, stressing the importance of self-determination, also in matters of faith. As a modernist missionary would not annoy easily impressionable 'pagans' with doctrinal pettifoggery, Wiersma emphasised, he was the best missionary of all.⁸²

4 Liberal Protestant Discourse in a Missionary Context

Foreign missions, their modernist champions concluded, ultimately came down to the personality of the missionary,⁸³ who should consciously take the intellectual capacity of his target audience into account.⁸⁴ Modernism as such, A.J.H.W. Brandt argued, was too difficult for 'pagans' to comprehend. To convey liberal Protestant principles, a missionary should therefore not weary his target audience with historical-critical interpretations of biblical stories. The Gospel narratives about Jesus's crucifixion and ascension could be told as such, as they formed an ideal framework "to educate children in harmony with the spirit of Christianity and to underpin their faith in the eternal value of the life of their souls."⁸⁵ Brandt was not afraid that this rather 'orthodox'

80 J.N. Wiersma, 'De roomsche missie in de Minahassa', *De Hervorming* 1886-34 (21 August 1886), 136-137.

81 C. Hille Ris Lambers, 'De vrijzinnigen en de zending', *Ibid.* 1905-30 (29 July 1905), 235-236, here 236.

82 [J.N. Wiersma in:] 'De vergadering van modernen, gehouden te Amsterdam op 6 en 7 April 1875', *Ibid.* 1875-16 (22 April 1875), 1; Boone, 'Moderne zendelingen 1850-1885', 36.

83 This is explicitly propagated by: J.C. Schagen van Soelen, *Oost-Indiën en de zending. Twee voordrachten* (Amsterdam 1886), 32. Schagen van Soelen argued that a missionary should have a bourgeois background, in order to make sure that he would exert a beneficial influence on natives. See: J.C. Schagen van Soelen, 'Feuilleton – De Allgem. Ev. Protest. Missions-Verein en de zending', *De Hervorming* 1886-22 (29 May 1886), 85-87, here 86.

84 Balsem, 'De zending en de moderne richting', 171.

85 A.J.H.W. Brandt, 'Zending', *De Hervorming* 1883-34 (25 August 1883), 134.

approach would cause 'pagan' converts to Christianity to lose their Christian faith altogether once they reached intellectual 'maturity'. After all, he rhetorically asked, had modernists themselves lost their faith after recognising that biblical stories should not be interpreted in a supernaturalist way? Introducing non-Christians to biblical imagery was just the first phase of missionary work. While an orthodox missionary stopped after that phase, taking the words of Scripture to be truths of faith, a modernist missionary would just be beginning the second phase of his work, in which he would teach the natives to distinguish between the 'mythological' form and actual meaning of biblical texts. With the right guidance, those indigenes could in due course make the transition from a 'childlike' orthodox to an 'intellectually mature' liberal interpretation of Christianity.⁸⁶

Liberal Protestant discourse, as analysed in chapter 6, is clearly implied in Brandt's words here. Indicative in this regard is his use of the word 'children', with which he did not refer to non-Christians of a young age, but to non-Christians in general; the latter were, intellectually, still at an 'infant stage'. As Joustra believed, natives could not reach a higher stage of development on their own, because they were simply not aware of their lack of cultivation.⁸⁷ Foreign missions brought them into contact with someone who was spiritually more developed than they were. As an ambassador of Christian civilisation, in many cases even the first Westerner with whom natives came into contact, a missionary was a 'spiritual aristocrat'.⁸⁸ His education should, in the first place, be *illustrative* in a literal sense: he should act as a 'tutor', on whom natives could pattern their own lives.⁸⁹ As in the case of social work 'at home', personal 'tutorage' from a 'spiritual aristocrat', a paragon of erudition, devoutness, and cultural refinement, was seen as the key to spreading civilisation.

Not all non-Christians were regarded as equally 'underdeveloped' in a spiritual sense. As mentioned, with Christianity standing at the top, religions on which cultures with a certain stratification and complexity were based

86 A.J.H.W. Brandt, 'Zending', *De Hervorming* 1883-32 (11 August 1883), 126; *Ibid.* 1883-34 (25 August 1883), 134.

87 Joustra, *De betekenissen der zending*, 24.

88 Foreign missions enabled Muslims and pagans to come into contact with individuals of a higher moral standing. See: C. Hille Ris Lambers, 'Ingezonden stukken – Zending', *De Hervorming* 1910-47 (19 November 1910), 374.

89 The notion of 'tutorage' and the idea that pagans were trapped in a low stage of development can clearly be heard in sentences such as the following: "If they are guided correctly, something good can be made of this population [living in the East Indies]." Quoted from: J.A. Beijerman, 'Het Nederlandsche Zendelinggenootschap', *Ibid.* 1890-33 (16 August 1890), 129-130, here 130.

were considered to be higher on the 'ladder' of civilisation than nature worship. In Hindu, Buddhist and Muslim societies, there was a clear distinction between an intellectual, learned elite and an unlettered, superstitious 'herd' that was absent in the more 'primitive' societies of inland Asia and Africa. Some modernists deemed it unnecessary to set up missionary activities in the first-mentioned societies at all,⁹⁰ or advised conducting missionary work among Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims only if their level of morality was demonstrably low – hence only among the 'common herd'.⁹¹ Others advocated the exact opposite approach, to which the German *Allgemeine evangelisch-protestantische Missionsverein* (General Protestant Mission Society or AEPMV) gave shape. This organisation, founded in 1884 and dealt with in more detail in chapter 11, wanted to conduct foreign missions only among the '*cultuurvolkeren*' in East Asia, and then only among the intellectual elite of those peoples. The idea behind this approach was that ideas and principles penetrate into society at large from top to bottom.⁹² India, China, and Japan provided Christianity with fertile ground to cultivate. Because the peoples living in these countries had immanent instead of transcendent conceptions of God, they were believed to be receptive to Christianity only in its antisupernaturalist, liberal Protestant form.⁹³ Moreover, corresponding to their position on the ladder of civilisation, they would never unquestioningly accept Christianity as a philosophy of life in place of their own religions. Missionaries should therefore look for 'elements of truth' in those religions with which liberal Protestantism could be linked up, and treat liberal Christianity as the culmination in which those 'elements of truth' would find their ultimate fulfilment.⁹⁴

Lecturing on the AEPMV at the 1886 meeting of modern theologians, J.C. Schagen van Soelen (1835-1903), who had worked as a minister in several

90 E.g.: H.W.Ph.E. van den Bergh van Eysinga, 'De zending in het licht van het Congres van Chicago', *De Hervorming* 1894-31 (4 August 1894), 121-122; 1894-32 (11 August 1894), 125-126.

91 M.C. van Mourik Broekman, 'Van overzee', *Ibid.* 1910-48 (26 November 1910), 377-378, here 378.

92 J.C. Schagen van Soelen, 'Feuilleton – De Allgem. Ev. Protest. Missions-Verein en de zending', *Ibid.* 1886-21 (22 May 1886), 81-83, here 81.

93 J.N. Wiersma, 'De roeping der modernen', *Ibid.* 1881-36 (16 September 1881), 145-146, here 145. [This issue is erroneously numbered as '1881-37'.]

94 'Buitenland – De Algemeene Evang. Prot. Zendingsvereeniging in Duitschland', *Ibid.* 1885-06 (7 February 1885), 23; J.C. Schagen van Soelen, 'Feuilleton – De Allgem. Ev. Protest. Missions-Verein en de zending', *Ibid.* 1886-22 (29 May 1886), 85-87, here 86; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, 'Hoofdartikel – De zending', *Ibid.* 1923-41 (13 October 1923), 321-323, here 322. Wiersma praised the AEPMV for working among the more 'civilised' peoples in East Asia, whom other missionary societies ignored. See: J.N. Wiersma, 'De zending in het licht van het Congres te Chicago', *Ibid.* 1894-33 (18 August 1894), 130.

congregations of the Protestant Church in the East Indies between 1864 and 1885, argued that the rationale behind the AEPMV's approach to foreign missions was unfounded. In so doing, he called history to witness. In late Antiquity, Christianity first became a powerful force among the masses, eventually leaving the imperial authorities in Rome no other choice than to embrace it themselves. In addition, more-developed Asians would come into contact with Christianity anyhow, as a result of ever-growing international intellectual and mercantile traffic.⁹⁵ What is more, Schagen van Soelen feared that the missionary strategy of the AEPMV would alienate the less developed masses in non-Christian societies from the more educated elites, thereby frustrating "a healthy social development, which the AEPMV paradoxically tries to foster, and which is necessary for Christianity to take root." The social law of interaction between the different classes in a society was completely ignored by the AEPMV.⁹⁶

Wiersma was less sceptical.⁹⁷ From personal experience, he could testify that only after members of what he called the "indigenous aristocracy" – upper-caste Brahmins in British India and native chieftains in the Dutch East Indies – showed themselves favourable to Christianity, did the rest of the indigenous population become eager to do the same.⁹⁸ J. Knappert, on the other hand, was highly critical. Factional division in Protestant church life should not be projected upon foreign missions, he felt, but that was exactly what would happen with the founding of a separate modernist missionary association. Modernists should not be motivated by the desire to spread their principles among non-Christians; their only concern should be to turn the latter into Christians.⁹⁹ This last statement troubled M.A.N. Rovers. In his eyes, missionaries should be satisfied with permeating indigenous peoples with a

95 [J.C. Schagen van Soelen in:] 'Binnenland – Vergadering der moderne theologen', *De Hervorming* 1886-17 (24 April 1886), 67. See also: Schagen van Soelen, *Oost-Indië en de zending*, 33-64; 'Oost-Indië en de zending', *De Protestant* IV.28 (10 July 1886), 2-3.

96 J.C. Schagen van Soelen, 'Feuilleton – De Allgem. Ev. Protest. Missions-Verein en de zending', *De Hervorming* 1886-21 (22 May 1886), 81-83, here 83. See also: Schagen van Soelen, *Oost-Indië en de zending*, 51.

97 Though he did feel that the AEPMV was 'too German' to be an attractive alternative to the NZG for liberal Protestants in the Netherlands. See: [J.N. Wiersma in:] 'Binnenland – Alkmaarsche Predikantenvereeniging', *De Hervorming* 1888-21 (26 May 1888), 83; [J.N. Wiersma in:] 'Binnenland – Alkmaarsche Predikantenvereeniging', *Ibid.* 1888-33 (18 August 1888), 130-131, here 130. See also: 'De nieuwe zendingsvereeniging', *De Protestant* III.7 (14 February 1885), 2.

98 [J.N. Wiersma in:] 'Binnenland – Zending', *De Hervorming* 1886-22 (29 May 1886), 86-87, here 86.

99 [J. Knappert in:] 'Binnenland – Zending', *Ibid.* 1886-22 (29 May 1886), 86-87, here 86.

Christian *spirit*, without urging natives to actually go over to Christianity – that is, without being baptised, identifying themselves as ‘Christians’, or attending church. Rovers used the Brahmo Samaj to make his point: as mentioned in chapter 5, this religious reform movement was inspired by (liberal) Christianity, but did not want Indians to forswear their Hindu identity. If the Brahmo Samaj had radically distanced itself from Hinduism, then it would have never been able to influence Indian society to the same extent as it currently did. Was it not enough, and even better for modernists, Rovers asked, to support movements like that one without engaging in foreign missions themselves?¹⁰⁰

5 The NPB in the Dutch East Indies

The abovementioned arguments used in the discussion on foreign missions did not change over time. Yet, as of the 1900s, three developments caused the discussion to get a new focus. First, even the most ardent modernist champions of the NZG had to admit in the early twentieth century that it was hard for modernists to sympathise with this missionary association. At this time, the NZG got into serious financial difficulties, which it tried to solve by seeking more support in orthodox circles, and even by seeking forms of collaboration with the exclusively orthodox missionary societies that had seceded from it in the mid-nineteenth century.¹⁰¹ Anticipating a successful outcome of those attempts, modernists who were in favour of foreign missions had to think of a potential alternative to the NZG. Second, the general feeling of marginalisation manifesting itself in modernist circles in the early twentieth century broadened the discussion on foreign missions, which had concentrated on modernists’ involvement with the NZG, into a more general discussion of modernists’ presence in the Dutch East Indies. Noting that their influence on social life in the Netherlands was not as big as they hoped it would be, modernists came to see that the situation in colonial life in the East Indies was similar. No modernist voices could be heard there, which was, in the modernists’ perception, due to religious indifference in the ethnically

100 [M.A.N. Rovers in:] ‘Binnenland – Zending’, *De Hervorming* 1886-22 (29 May 1886), 86-87, here 87.

101 ‘Binnenland – Nederlandsch Zendelinggenootschap’, *Leeuwarder Courant* CLII.15 (14 August 1902), 2; J.N. Wiersma, ‘Nederlandsch Zendeling Genootschap’, *De Hervorming* 1902-28 (12 July 1902), 218-219, here 219; J.N. Wiersma, ‘Het Nederl. Zendeling-Genootschap’, *Ibid.* 1902-51 (20 December 1902), 402-403, here 402; Cyriacus [B.W. Colenbrander], ‘Uit de kerkelijke wereld’, *Ibid.* 1903-24 (13 June 1903), 188-189, here 189.

Dutch and Indo-European communities, and to strong orthodox tendencies in the colonial Protestant Church.¹⁰² As a result, a sense of urgency about becoming more active in the East Indies made itself felt among modernists. Third, the discussion on foreign missions was pushed into a new direction due to the gradually declining role of the NPB in the modernist movement. With the vvH and, later, the CC taking over some of the tasks it had previously fulfilled or tasks it might fulfil, the NPB had to reconsider what it wanted to be and what it could still do. The East Indies provided it with a potential new field of activity and hence with a new reason to exist. Moreover, if it were indeed to seize this opportunity, the NPB might become an alternative to the NZG and thereby get modernists a better hearing in colonial life.

Several steps were accordingly taken to give the NPB a foothold in the Dutch East Indies. In 1905, an NPB branch was founded in Batavia.¹⁰³ In 1906, A.S. Carpentier Alting held a lecture at the annual meeting of modern theologians in Amsterdam, in which he argued that materialism and confessionality were just as big a threat to the free development of religious life in the East Indies as they were in the Netherlands, and hence that the NPB had a duty to act.¹⁰⁴ In 1907, at his suggestion,¹⁰⁵ an *Indische Commissie* (Commission for the East

102 E.g.: J. de Jong, 'Van Salatiga', *De Hervorming* 1883-31 (4 August 1883), 121-122, here 122; J. de Jong, 'Binnenland – Oost-Indische toestanden op kerkelijk gebied', *Ibid.* 1884-05 (2 February 1884), 19; 1884-08 (23 February 1884), 33; V.d.Z., 'De minister Keuchenius, de Indische Kerk en de Synodale Commissie', *Ibid.* 1889-31 (3 August 1889), 122; C. Rogge, 'De Protestantse Kerk in Nederlandsch-Indië', *Ibid.* 1891-39 (26 September 1891), 155-156, here 155; x., 'Brieven van een hulpprediker in N.-Indië', *Ibid.* 1893-14 (8 April 1893), 54; Delius, 'Uit Ned. Indië', *Ibid.* 1906-09 (3 March 1906), 67-68, here 67; A. Rutgers van der Loeff, 'Nederlandsche Protestantenvbond – De Indische Commissie', *Ibid.* 1910-10 (5 March 1910), 73; 'Berichten, enz. – Over vrijzinnige predikanten in Indië', *Ibid.* 1913-36 (6 September 1913), 284-285; S. Bartstra, 'Een dominés dienstreis in Ned. Indië', *Teekenen des Tijds* xv (1913), 37-57, here 45; A.H. van der Hoeve, 'Verscheidenheden en mededeelingen – Een paar vragen', *De Hervorming* 1919-41 (11 October 1941), 185; 'Kerknieuws – Vrijzinnigen en Indië', *Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant* LXXXIII.244 (3 September 1926), evening paper A, 2; F. Pont, 'Binnenland – Dr. L.J. van Holk's smaadreden over den Indischen predikantenstand en de Indische Kerk', *De Hervorming* 1930-01 (4 January 1930), 3-4, here 3.

103 [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Berichten, enz. – Uit Batavia', *Ibid.* 1905-01 (7 January 1905), 5; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Berichten, enz. – Het verslag', *Ibid.* 1905-39 (30 September 1905), 308.

104 A.S. Carpentier Alting, 'Een groot belang ook voor de Nederlandsch-Indische samenleving is, dat onze beginselen aldaar meer tot invloed komen', appendix to *Ibid.* 1906-21 (26 May 1906), 18-21.

105 C.R. Bakhuizen van den Brink, 'Levensbericht van Albertus Samuel Carpentier Alting', in: *Handelingen en mededeelingen van de Maatschappij der Nederlandsche Letterkunde te Leiden, over het jaar 1915-1916* II (Leiden 1916), 105-133, here 126.

Indies) was established during the annual NPB assembly.¹⁰⁶ The only concrete task it was given at the assembly was to interest Dutch modernist ministers and teachers of religion in going to the East Indies, initially to work among “less well-off Europeans and low-ranking soldiers.”¹⁰⁷ The question remained as to whether the commission should be given other tasks as well, and whether one of those tasks ought to be the organisation of foreign missions among Indonesian natives under the banner of the NPB. Several weeks before the 1908 general assembly, the NPB executive board did indeed propose to charge the commission with this latter task.¹⁰⁸ Yet, at the assembly, the objections to foreign missions in modernist circles proved still too strong; the word ‘mission’ in the board’s proposal was therefore replaced by the less specific term ‘activities’. This amended proposal was accepted,¹⁰⁹ but no attempts were made afterwards to make concrete what those ‘activities’ might be; the commission probably feared that *any* activity among non-Christians would be rejected as a kind of foreign mission. The accepted amended proposal thus remained a dead letter in practice. As the commission did not manage to interest any ministers or teacher of religions, its range of duties was limited to the shipping of brochures to the East Indies on request, referred to as ‘*postpropaganda*’ (‘propaganda by mail’).¹¹⁰

In 1925, however, M. Joustra again raised the question of whether the Commission for the East Indies should do something for the benefit of natives.¹¹¹ He brought to modernists’ attention the fact that the *Nederlandsch Bijbelgenootschap* (Dutch Bible Society) had sent the moderately orthodox theolo-

106 Consequently, the general objective of the *Protestantenbond* was changed to: “the advancement of the free development of religious life, both within and outside of the circle of churches, in the Netherlands and the Dutch colonies.” See: ‘Binnenlandsch nieuws – Nederlandsche Protestantenvond’, *Het Nieuws van den Dag* 1907-11605 (25 October 1907), 5; *Handelingen NPB* 1907, 10.

107 [A.S. Carpentier Alting in:] *Ibid.*, 41.

108 ‘Nederlandsche Protestantenvond – Hoofdbestuur’, *De Hervorming* 1908-36 (5 September 1908), 281-282, here 281; *Handelingen NPB* 1908, 11.

109 [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Berichten, enz. – De Protestantenvond en de zending’, *De Hervorming* 1908-37 (12 September 1908), 292; *Handelingen NPB* 1908, 33-35. Yet, the original proposal gained applause as well. M.H. Schippers could see no reason why modernist ministers should not be allowed to simultaneously work among natives and non-natives. See: [M.H. Schippers in:] *Ibid.*

110 *Handelingen NPB* 1914, 4-5.

111 M. Joustra, ‘De bond en Indië – Kunnen wij iets voor Indië doen?’, *De Hervorming* 1925-06 (7 February 1925), 43-45; M. Joustra, “*Steekt af naar de diepte*”. *Een roepstem uitgaande van de Indische Commissie van den Nederlandschen Protestantenvond voor ons werk in Indië* (Leiden 1925).

gian H. Kraemer (1888-1965) to the East Indies to get in touch with the spiritually most highly developed Javanese, and to study what was going on in their circles. By doing this, Kraemer could inform missionaries about changes in the indigenous culture, and could introduce such Indonesians to a culture that was 'spiritually higher' than their own. Just as in the case of the initiators of the organisations mentioned in chapter 9, Joustra suggested following orthodoxy's example. A modernist 'Kraemer' should be enabled to live in "a centre of indigenous spiritual and intellectual life," and should try, by mingling among the spiritually most highly developed natives, corresponding with them, giving lectures, and making use of the press, "not to convert intellectual Indonesia, but to inform it about, and bring it into the sphere of influence of, our liberal Christianity."¹¹² The rationale behind this proposal was the same as the rationale behind the missionary methodology of the AEPMV and the editorial reform of *De Hervorming* effectuated in January 1918: by targeting the intellectual 'elite', modernist ideas and ideals could hopefully ultimately penetrate into society at large. Joustra's suggestion was not adopted. Yet the Commission for the East Indies did intensify its efforts to spread liberal Protestant principles within the Dutch colonial community. In 1929, it assisted several Dutchmen in the East Indies, who sought to strengthen their bonds with liberal Protestants in the Netherlands and with other liberal Protestants in the East Indies, in founding the *Groep van vrijzinnig-godsdienstigen in Nederlandsch-Indië* (Group of Religious Liberals in the Dutch East Indies).¹¹³ This group was intended to function as an Indonesian equivalent to the NPB, and was integrated as a separate entity into the CC in 1932.¹¹⁴ In order to support this entity more effectively than the Commission for the East Indies could do, the executive board of the NPB decided to disband the commission in 1933, and to coordinate matters related to the East Indies itself.¹¹⁵

6 The Modernist Movement and Foreign Missions: An Evaluation

In 1925, to return to the case with which this chapter started, C.B. Burger reflected upon the relationship between liberal Protestantism and foreign missions. Burger did not merely observe that the two had always been 'difficult'

¹¹² Joustra, "Steekt af naar de diepte", 9, 11.

¹¹³ 'School en Kerk – Vrijzinnig godsdienstigen', *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad* XLV.135 (17 May 1929), 6; 'Overzicht over den arbeid der Centrale Commissie van 1923-1937', 46-50, 70.

¹¹⁴ 'Kerknieuws – Vergadering van de Centrale Commissie voor het Vrijzinnig Protestantisme', *Het Vaderland* (18 May 1932), evening paper C, 3.

¹¹⁵ S. Spaans, 'Bondsnieuws – Hoofdbestuur', *De Hervorming* 1933-01 (19 January 1933), 6.

to combine; he also proposed two reasons that explained why this was so. The first of these reasons was a fundamental one. Right after the NZG had experienced an exodus of orthodox Protestants in the late 1850s due to its perceived tolerance of modern theology, the comparative study of religion began to take off in modernist circles. In Burger's view, studying Christianity as one religion among many, instead of as the exclusive source of divine revelation, nourished the idea "that every religion had much that was good, and that non-Christians ought not to be deprived of the religions they adhered to, for it was impossible to ascertain whether Christianity truly was a higher form of religion."¹¹⁶ As demonstrated in this chapter, Burger exaggerated a bit here; the earliest modernists still believed that Christianity was intellectually and morally superior, equating it with the highest level of civilisation and humanity. Yet it is true that they unlinked salvation from belief in Jesus Christ as Redeemer, and stated that the principles of Jesus, which they argued Christianity was all about, were not confined to what was historically identified as 'Christianity'. In other words, it was not necessary to forsake one's non-Christian faith in order to become a 'Christian', i.e. to become truly human in accordance with the principles of Jesus. In consequence, the opinion that foreign missions were something to be left to orthodoxy, because the latter's dogmas were easier to get across to uncultured and uneducated natives, or because missionary activities as such were seen as an infringement on the free development of religious life, took root in the modernist movement.¹¹⁷ This may seem remarkable – after all, precisely because modernism lacked specific doctrines, its earliest adherents tended to see it as the only form of Christianity that could develop into the universal religion of mankind, for the realisation of which hope continued to be cherished in modernist circles until well into the twentieth century.¹¹⁸ What is more, if playing down the absoluteness of Christianity could sufficiently explain modernists' lack of enthusiasm for foreign missions, one would expect that their involvement in missionary activities would have increased at the beginning of the twentieth century, when malcontentism and right-wing modernism caused the uniqueness of Christianity to be played down less in modernist circles. But such an increase did not occur.

116 [C.B. Burger in:] 'Geestelijk leven – De vrijzinnigen en de zending', *De Telegraaf* XXXIII.12493 (8 July 1925), 12.

117 Still in the 1920s, this opinion could be heard. See, e.g.: 'Kerknieuws – Het oude dilemma', *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* LXXXI.61 (1 March 1924), morning paper B, 2.

118 Exemplary in this respect is the lecture on foreign missions that S. Hoekstra gave at the meeting of modern theologians in 1866. See: Herderscheê, *De modern-godsdienstige richting in Nederland*, 380; Boone, "In het belang van zedelijkheid en recht", 92.

The fact that, in spite of the hope for a universal religion and changes in modern theology, modernists' involvement in foreign missions was low in the last decades of the nineteenth century, and continued to be low afterwards, had to do with the second, pragmatic reason Burger mentioned. In response to the founding of missionary societies on an explicitly orthodox basis, the NZG tried to win back orthodox Protestants' sympathy by keeping the modernist movement more at distance. As the case of J.N. Wiersma exemplifies in particular, the position of the very few missionaries with modernist sympathies in the NZG was controversial to say the least. The willingness to support the NZG was accordingly not very high among modernists; why should they contribute to an association that did not want to involve them too closely in its activities and hence only worked in favour of orthodoxy?¹¹⁹ Founding a missionary association on a theologically liberal basis, as was done in Germany in 1884, was not considered within the bounds of possibility by Dutch modernists. Not only were the fundamental objections against the whole concept of foreign missions too big among modernists for such an association to come into being; there were no widely shared, concrete answers given to the question of how foreign missions on a liberal basis should be organised in the first place.¹²⁰ Moreover, modernists could simply not afford to actively engage in foreign missions, as they had to apply all of their energy and resources to defend their own position in *Dutch* society and church life against Christian orthodoxy.¹²¹ The editor of the ecclesial affairs section in the *Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant* stingingly argued in 1924 that they had manoeuvred themselves into this unenviable situation: both in the Dutch Reformed Church and in the NZG, modernists had allowed orthodoxy to gain the upper hand.¹²² Their position had become so precarious that fighting a two-front battle was not an option: spending time and money on the missionary front would inevitably be at the expense of their attempt to counteract their marginalisation on the home front. Contrary to the modernist-based organisations mentioned in the previous chapter, an exclusively liberal Protestant missionary association therefore never came into being.

119 Still in the 1920s, this sentiment was strong. See, e.g.: 'Kerknieuws – Het oude dilemma', *Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant* LXXXI.61 (1 March 1924), morning paper B, 2; [C.B. Burger in:] 'Geestelijk leven – De vrijzinnigen en de zending', *De Telegraaf* XXXIIL12493 (8 July 1925), 12; 'Kerknieuws – Vrijzinnigen en Indië', *Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant* LXXXIIL244 (3 September 1926), evening paper A, 2.

120 'Geestelijk leven – Vrijzinnigen en Indië', *De Indische Courant* VI.20 (8 October 1926), 6.

121 'Kerknieuws – Vrijzinnigen en Indië', *Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant* LXXXIIL244 (3 September 1926), evening paper A, 2.

122 'Kerknieuws – Het oude dilemma', *Ibid.* LXXXI.61 (1 March 1924), morning paper B, 2.

However, the feeling of marginalisation that led to calls for modernist-based schools and a concentration of modernist forces within liberal political parties, as well as to the founding of liberal Protestant youth organisations and the VPRO, did induce Dutch liberal Protestants to intensify their concern with the Dutch East Indies. Spreading liberal Protestantism among Indonesian natives might not be possible, but defending it within the ethnically Dutch community living in the East Indies had become just as necessary as defending it in the Netherlands. Modernists perceived much religious indifference among their countrymen on the largest Dutch colony and became increasingly worried about the influence of orthodoxy in the colonial Protestant Church. As a result, after A.S. Carpentier Alting managed to create a sense of urgency about counteracting these developments in colonial life at the meeting of modern theologians in 1906, the NPB established a commission charged with sending liberal Protestant literature as well as ministers and teachers of religion to the East Indies in 1907. Because the colonial Protestant Church did not generate much enthusiasm in modernist circles – not only was it dominated by orthodoxy, but it was also interdenominational, which was at odds with the ‘ecclesial turn’ and the related accentuation of denominational differences in the early-twentieth century modernist movement¹²³ –, this commission failed to set in motion an influx of modernist-minded ministers and teachers of religion into colonial church life. It was further hindered in realising its aims due to the First World War, which severely hampered communication between the Netherlands and the East Indies in the mid-1910s.¹²⁴ When the feeling of marginalisation in modernist circles reached a peak in the 1920s, it was therefore

¹²³ In Dutch Mennonite circles, for example, an initiative was taken to investigate whether Mennonites in the Dutch East Indies might be organised separately. To that end, the minister H. Britzel was sent to the East Indies in 1914. Separate Mennonite groups were indeed created there, causing some controversy in NPB circles. See: [H. Britzel in:] ‘Een woord tot de doopsgezinden op Java’, *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad* XXIX.145 (27 May 1914), 5-6; [H. Britzel in:] ‘Redactioneel – De Protestantsche Kerk op Java’, *De Hervorming* 1914-47 (21 November 1914), 402; ‘Kerknieuws – Doopsgezinden in Indië’, *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* LXXI.326 (24 November 1914), morning paper A, 2; H. Britzel, *Mijn Indische reis in 1914 of Naar de doopsgezinden op Java* (Wormerveer 1916); E.M. van Kerkrade, ‘Hoofd-artikelen – Schetsen uit den Oost’, *De Hervorming* 1917-51 (22 December 1917), 424-425; 1917-52 (29 December 1917), 437-438. An additional reason for modernist ministers not to go the East Indies was that their chances of getting an appointment in the Protestant Church there were minimal. See: ‘Berichten, enz. – “Over vrijzinnige predikanten in Indië”’, *Ibid.* 1913-37 (13 September 1913), 292.

¹²⁴ As mentioned in: A. Rutgers van der Loeff, ‘Verslag van de Indische Commissie van den Ned. Protestantenvbond’, in: *Jaarboek NPB* 1918, 88; *Jaarboek NPB* 1919, 112-113, here 112; *Jaarboek NPB* 1920, 116-117, here 116.

decided to organise modernist-minded Dutchmen and Dutchwomen in the East Indies more tightly *outside* of the Protestant Church. That way, modernists in the East Indies would ultimately become capable of defending their interests themselves, this allowing for activities in defence of liberal Protestantism to be organised on the spot instead of directed from the Netherlands, and for the commission for the East Indies of the NPB to have merely a supporting instead of a leading role. With the assistance of the latter, the NPB-like Group of Religious Liberals in the Dutch East Indies was formed in 1929. The separate representation it got in the CC reflected its independence vis-à-vis the NPB.

The International Liberal Protestant ‘Family’

1 “A Grand Global Movement”

In July 1922, K.H. Roessingh wrote an article in *De Hervorming* titled ‘*Modernisme en internationalisme*’ (‘Modernism and Internationalism’). He lamented that at the time, “Dutch modernism in general develops rather isolatedly – it does not know, and does not feel, that it is part of a grand global movement.” In the early 1920s, Dutch modernists did not seem to care about the difficulties with which like-minded groups abroad had to cope, and failed to recognise that they could infuse their movement with new vigour if they would strengthen the bonds with these groups. Corresponding with a general trend among then modernist opinion leaders that I particularly addressed in relation to the founding of modernist-based organisations in chapter 9, Roessingh urged his fellow modernists to follow orthodox Protestants’ example: the latter were more aware of fighting for the same cause as their co-religionists in other countries and were much better organised at the international level. Yet, a feeling of togetherness with liberal Protestants abroad, he noticed, had not always been absent in Dutch modernist circles:

When I was leafing through about forty old volumes of *De Hervorming* some time ago, it struck me that back then [...], the reader was excellently informed about religious and ecclesial life abroad [...]. This information was not confined to some anecdotal particularities, to the *chronique scandaleuse* of Christianity and church, but [*De Hervorming*] tried to give a good and clear impression of the inner and outward development of liberal-religious life across the borders in regularly published articles.¹

Indeed, before the drastic editorial U-turn in 1918, *De Hervorming* had had a separate section devoted to occurrences affecting liberal Protestantism out-

¹ K.H. Roessingh, ‘Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Modernisme en internationalisme’, *De Hervorming* 1922-27 (8 July 1922), 211-212, here 211.

side of the Netherlands.² In a follow-up article published a week later, Roessingh mentioned a second example to show that the solidarity with foreign modernists had once been stronger: in the 1900s and early 1910s, several conferences had been held in Boston and a handful of major European cities, including Amsterdam, during which religious liberals from different countries and with various religious backgrounds had discussed with each other what was going on in theology, church life, and society in their respective countries.³ Roessingh forgot to bring up a third example: prior to the first international modernist conference, the NPB had welcomed representatives of foreign leagues of liberal Protestants at its annual assemblies many times, and had frequently sent representatives of its own to the annual assemblies of these leagues as well.⁴ As an association defending modernist interests, the

2 The importance of this is stressed in: M.C. van Mourik Broekman, 'Hoofdartikel – Internationaal vrij-religieus congres', *De Hervorming* 1922-36 (9 September 1922), 282-283, here 283; H. de Lang, "'De Hervorming" 50 jaar – Een groot middenstuk', *Ibid.* 1925-47 (21 November 1925), 369-370, here 370; H. Oort, 'De toekomst van "De Hervorming"', *Ibid.*, 16 October 1926 (1926-42), 331-332. The foreign affairs section in *De Hervorming* was restored in 1927.

3 K.H. Roessingh, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Modernisme en internationalisme', *Ibid.* 1922-28 (15 July 1922), 219-220, here 219. The idea of holding international conferences of religious liberals had taken root after the World's Parliament of Religions was held during the 1893 Chicago World Fair. The decision to convene such conferences was made at an international meeting in honour of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the American Unitarian Association in Boston on 25 May 1900. The first such conference was held in London in 1901. See: D. Lüddeckens, *Das Weltparlament der Religionen von 1893. Strukturen interreligiöser Begegnung im 19. Jahrhundert* (Berlin and New York 2002); A.L. Molendijk, 'To Unite Religion Against All Irreligion. The 1893 World Parliament of Religions', *Journal for the History of Modern Theology | Zeitschrift für Neuere Theologiegeschichte* XVIII (2011), 228-250; C.W. Wendte, 'The Report of the General Secretary', in: W. Copeland Bowie (ed.), *Liberal Religious Thought at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century. Addresses and Papers at the International Council of Unitarian and Other Liberal Religious Thinkers and Workers, held in London, May, 1901* (London 1901), 321-329, here 321-322; *Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of the American Unitarian Association, Boston, May 20-27* ([Boston 1900]); R. Traer, 'A Short History of the IARF', in: *Centennial Reflections*, 17-32; E.G.E. van der Wall, 'Een wereldparlement van vrijzinnigen. Religie en transnationalisme (1900-1914)', in: Van Driel and Houkes (eds.), *Het vrijzinnige web*, 157-179.

4 Several foreign delegates to the annual NPB assemblies have left accounts of their experiences. Their accounts are particularly significant, as they perfectly reflect the spirit of the age in Dutch modernist circles. For instance, the Alsatian Lutheran minister L. Leblois (1825-1898), who had attended the 1878 NPB assembly, sung the praises of Dutch modernism in *Le Progrès Religieux*: among the internationally known liberal Protestant theologians of the time, he noted, Dutchmen were well represented. In 1885, J.R. Hanne (1842-1923), who had been present at the annual NPB assembly that year on behalf of the *Protestantenvereniging*, expressed himself in similar terms. However, in 1903, British Unitarian P.W. Wicksteed,

NPB was not one-of-a-kind. In fact, it was the Dutch link in an international network of NPB-like associations, founded in the 1860s, 1870s, and 1880s.⁵

Alluding to modernists' initiatives to counteract their marginalisation, the rise of right-wing modernism, and the intensified denominational awareness in modernist circles, Roessingh acknowledged that there were "enough interesting things going on, and enough things to quarrel about, at the ecclesial and religious level within the borders of our own country," as a result of which Dutch modernists had lost touch with their foreign allies in the last couple of years.⁶ But a sense of international solidarity was not only lacking among Dutch modernists: liberal Protestants in other countries were, equally, less involved with their international contacts than they had been before. This, Roessingh explained, was a consequence of the First World War. Between 1914 and 1918, it had been impossible to keep in touch. Contacts had to be re-established from scratch. What complicated matters was that the war had led to tense relations between nations, which had repercussions on the relations among the nationally organised liberal Protestant communities. Before the outbreak of the war, liberal Protestants from both sides of the Atlantic had met each other at international conferences once every two to three years, but were not involved in joint activities in the meantime.⁷ Roessingh therefore urged liberal Protestants everywhere to organise theological collaboration, collective social initiatives and communal youth work on an ongoing basis.⁸ To his delight, he noted that his words had already set something in motion in 1923: "the awareness of being a global movement together is growing [among liberal Protestants from all across the globe]."⁹ An organisation that served

who had been a delegate to NPB assemblies several times, expressed disappointment that liberal Protestantism had "seemed to conquer the Netherlands by storm" in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, while it had now lost "the boldness and pride of its youth" altogether: "in my opinion, its heydays are in the past." See: L. Leblois, 'Lettres de Hollande', *Le Progrès Religieux* x1.47 (23 November 1878), 373-374; x1.49 (7 December 1878), 388-390; x1.50 (14 December 1878), 395-397; x1.51 (21 December 1878), 403-407; L. Leblois, *Lettres de Hollande* (Paris 1879); [J.R. Hanne in:] 'Buitenland – De Duitsche afgevaardigden weêr tehuis', *De Hervorming* 1885-47 (21 November 1885), 187; [P.H. Wicksteed in: H. de Lang], 'Wicksteeds herinneringen', *Ibid.* 1903-36 (5 September 1903), 285-286.

5 Krijger, 'De organisatorische spin in het vrijzinnige web', 55-57.

6 K.H. Roessingh, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Modernisme en internationalisme', *De Hervorming* 1922-27 (8 July 1922), 211-212, here 211.

7 Cf.: J.J. Meyer, 'Kerknieuws – De int. bijeenkomsten te Kopenhagen', *Het Vaderland* (14 February 1934), evening paper C, 2.

8 K.H. Roessingh, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Modernisme en internationalisme', *De Hervorming* 1922-28 (15 July 1922), 219-220, here 219.

9 K.H. Roessingh, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Eenheid en organisatie van het vrijzinnig protestantisme', *Ibid.* 1923-20 (19 May 1923), 154-156, here 155.

the latter's interests all year round would finally be established in 1930 under the name of 'International Association for Liberal Christianity and Religious Freedom' (IARF).¹⁰

The NPB and the Dutch modernist movement in general were embedded in the ecclesial, religious, social, political, and cultural context of the Netherlands – a context that differed from that of other countries. It would take too far afield to list all the differences between the Dutch and other national contexts here, but, in relation to liberal Protestantism, one important difference needs to be accentuated. While not being an established church in a strict sense, the Dutch Reformed Church had had a privileged position in the Netherlands in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It was closely intertwined with the secular power and had a profound impact on Dutch culture.¹¹ Although church and state were constitutionally separated in 1796, the Dutch government continued to intervene in church life: through the department of Roman Catholic worship and the department of Reformed and other non-Catholic worship, it tried to reconfigure the ecclesial landscape – in which it partially succeeded: it did manage to restructure the Dutch Reformed Church, the Lutheran Church, and the Jewish community –, concerned itself with the appointment and training of church employees, and actively tried to stop the secession movement of the '*Afscheiding*' from spreading within the Dutch Reformed Church in 1834 and subsequent years.¹² After the promulgation of a new constitution in 1848, the Dutch government no longer tried to influence internal church affairs.¹³ The Dutch modernist movement could thus develop without direct state interference in ecclesial life. In the United Kingdom, the Scandinavian countries, the Swiss cantons, the German territories, and, prior to 1905, also in France, by contrast, state interference in church life and even, to

10 This name was adopted in 1932. The term 'Liberal Christianity' was definitively dropped in 1969. See: M. Braybrooke, *Pilgrimage of Hope. One Hundred Years of Global Interfaith Dialogue* (London 1992), 51.

11 J.I. Israel, *The Dutch Republic. Its Rise, Greatness and Fall, 1477-1806* (Oxford 1995), esp. 221-222, 361-398, 476, 637-676, 1019-1037.

12 A.E.M. Ribberink, 'Departementen van Eredienst 1808-1870', *Nederlands Archievenblad* xcvi.1 (1997), 297-306; W.P. Secker, 'Het kommervolle bestaan van de departementen van Eredienst', in: Van Baalen et al. (eds.), *God in de Nederlandse politiek*, 62-75; E. Bos, *Soevereiniteit en religie. Godsdienstvrijheid onder de eerste Oranjevorst* (Hilversum 2009), 283-366.

13 Yet, until 1983, it continued to assume certain financial responsibilities for the payment of ministers in various church denominations, including, most prominently, the Dutch Reformed Church. See: W.H. den Ouden, *De ontknoping van de zilveren koorde. De geschiedenis van de rijkstraktementen in de Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk* (Zoetermeer 2004).

a certain extent, state involvement in doctrinal discussions was still standard practice after the first half of the nineteenth century. As Lindeboom shows in the third volume of *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme*, this state of affairs deeply influenced the development of Protestant liberalism as a current in church life in those countries.¹⁴

While the Dutch modernist movement was confronted with specific national circumstances that differed from those in other countries, comparable liberal Protestant movements existed elsewhere. As has been said, with the exception of the period between 1914 and the early 1920s, liberal Protestants did cultivate their relationship with like-minded groups outside of their own country. Moreover, in the United States and everywhere in industrialising Europe, liberal Protestants were confronted with orthodox agitation and with the consequences of 'the social question'.

This chapter compares the history of the Dutch modernist movement to that of the foreign groups with which Dutch modernists were in contact. By so doing, it wants to analyse whether liberal Protestant movements outside of the Netherlands have developed along similar lines as the Dutch modernist movement. Particular attention is devoted to Germany and the United States. There are several reasons for this. As Roessingh wittily stressed what the first chapter, dealing with the roots of modernism, has indicated, "[Dutch modern] theology (and almost the same goes for English and American [modern theology]) is seventy-five per cent 'made in Germany'."¹⁵ What is more, the NPB was modelled after a German example. A focus on the United States and specifically on Unitarianism is justified since the organisation and financing of the international conferences of religious liberals mostly depended on American Unitarians.¹⁶ In addition, while theological ideas identified as 'liberal' also cir-

14 Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III, esp. 107-108, 112, 125-126 (Germany); 140-143, 148 (France); 157 (Switzerland); 177 (Scandinavia); 182 (Hungary); 183 (Romania).

15 K.H. Roessingh, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Modernisme en internationalisme', *De Hervorming* 1922-27 (8 July 1922), 211-212, here 211. Dorrien confirms this in: G.J. Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology 1. Imagining Progressive Religion, 1805-1900* (Louisville and London 2001), xvi, 403-404.

16 H. de Lang, 'De Unitariërs', *De Hervorming* 1903-31 (1 August 1903), 241-242, here 241; 'Nog iets over de Unitariërs', *Ibid.* 1903-34 (22 August 1903), 265-266, here 265; K.H. Roessingh, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Internationale vrijzinnig-godsdienstige organisatie', *Ibid.* 1923-03 (20 January 1923), 18-19, here 19; K.H. Roessingh, 'Het internationaal vrijzinnig congres', *Ibid.* 1925-23 (6 June 1925), 179-180, here 179; 'Berichten en mededeelingen – Het Internationaal Verbond voor Vrijzinnig Christendom en Geloofsvrijheid', *Ibid.* 1931-02 (10 February 1931), 15-16, here 16.

culated in other church communities in the United States,¹⁷ Unitarians were the only American church denomination that established relations with the NPB and similar European associations.¹⁸

While this chapter deals with Germany and the United States at greater length, there are three reasons to include other countries in the analysis as well. First, if parallels become apparent in the history of modernists in the Netherlands and those in Germany and the United States indeed, it can (and should) be questioned whether it is legitimate to claim that such a parallel development uncovers a universal *pattern* in the development of liberal Protestantism worldwide. To determine this, more material for comparison is needed. Second, in some countries, liberal Protestantism emerged only *after* the 1860s. If asynchronism did not account for a difference in development, the argument made in this study in reference to the Netherlands that the lack of accomplishments (vis-à-vis the ambitions and pretentions with which it announced itself) and appeal of the modernist movement stemmed in large part from factors *intrinsic* to liberal Protestantism itself, would be reinforced. Third, Dutch modernists not only had contacts with co-religionists in Germany and the United States. Their ties with liberal Protestants in some other countries were even closer. For instance, through the *réunion wallonne*, the assembly of Walloon Reformed congregations within the Dutch Reformed Church, there was a strong link between the Dutch modernist movement and liberal Protestantism in Francophone Europe.¹⁹ In Hungary and South Africa, the theologians who were the first to organise liberal Protestants had even been trained at Leiden University.

2 Germany

In continental Europe, the first organisation intended to defend the interests of liberal Protestants was established in the Palatinate in 1858. An organisation targeting liberal-minded Protestants in all German territories, called the '*Deutsche Protestantenverein*' ('German Association of Protestants'), was

17 As Dorrien shows in: Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology* I; G.J. Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology* II. *Idealism, Realism, and Modernity, 1900-1950* (Louisville and London 2003).

18 This is the reason why Universalists, although being part of the history of religious liberalism in the United States, are not dealt with in this chapter. The first time Universalists were represented at an international conference of religious liberals was in Berlin in 1910.

19 D.F. Poujol, *Histoire et influence des églises wallonnes dans les Pays-Bas* (Paris 1902).

created in Frankfurt am Main in 1863 and officially constituted in Eisenach in 1865.²⁰ It was structured as a national organisation with branches at the local and regional level.²¹ As well as defending the ecclesial interests of liberal Protestants, local branches were centres of sociability and organised lectures as well as religious services. Many regional branches issued opinion magazines. At the national level, the *Protestantenverein* held *Protestantentage* (Protestant Days) at different locations each year, during which representatives of local and regional branches assembled for a general meeting, and lectures were held on a broad variety of ecclesial, social, and theological topics. These lectures were open to the general public, which accentuated that the *Protestantentage* were meant to be manifestations of liberal Protestant strength to the outside world: they tried to demonstrate that liberal Protestants were a force in church and social life prefiguring the Christianity of tomorrow.²² The national *Protestantenverein* also published pamphlets, dispatched propagandists all across the German principalities, and established subcommittees entrusted with specific tasks.²³ Although it did not have regional branches, the NPB – as a union of independent local branches, the organising body of *Protestantendagen*, the publisher of a liberal opinion magazine, and an association claiming the title of ‘true Protestants’ for its membership – was clearly modelled on the *Protestantenverein*.²⁴ Colenbrander even

20 D. Schenkel, *Der deutsche Protestantenverein und seine Bedeutung in der Gegenwart* (Wiesbaden 1868), 22.

21 H.M. Kirn, ‘Protestantenverein’, in: G. Müller (ed.), *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* xxvii (Berlin and New York 1997), 538–542, here 539. The largest regional branch was the one in the Palatinate. See: F. Borggreffe, ‘Liberal, sozial, protestantisch. Aus der Geschichte des Pfälzischen Vereins für Protestantische Liebeswerke’, *Blätter für pfälzische Kirchengeschichte und religiöse Volkskunde* LXXIII (2006), 75–89, here 76, 78; C. Lepp, ‘Der liberale Südwesten. Statuten und Leben der Protestantenvereine in Baden und der Pfalz’, *Jahrbuch für badische Kirchen- und Religionsgeschichte* IV (2010), 23–45, here 34–36.

22 G. Hübing, *Kulturprotestantismus und Politik. Zum Verhältnis von Liberalismus und Protestantismus in wilhelminischen Deutschland* (Tübingen 1994), 164–170.

23 Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* 111, 112–113.

24 Lindeboom argues that liberal Protestants in Germany, the Netherlands, and elsewhere formed associations of *Protestants* instead of associations of *liberal* Protestants, because the name ‘Protestant’ had historically been used particularly by champions of a doctrinally tolerant Christianity above denominational differences. Hence, liberal Protestants felt that they were exclusively entitled to call themselves ‘Protestants’ – in fact, they even considered ‘liberal Protestant’ to be a pleonasm. See: J. Lindeboom, ‘Oorsprong en geschiedenis van den naam “protestant”’, *Mededeelingen der Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen, afdeling Letterkunde* 111.2 (1940), 47–77, here 77.

explicitly stated that he had the *Protestantenverein* in mind when he argued for the founding of a Dutch association of modernists in the late 1860s.²⁵ With the exception of those in France, advocates of church reform based on historical-critical modern theological views elsewhere in Europe founded organisations of their own explicitly patterned after the *Protestantenverein* as well.

Aspiring to "a renewal of the Protestant Church in the spirit of evangelical freedom and in harmony with the entire cultural development of our time," the *Protestantenverein* was an organisational linchpin of what came to be called '*Kulturprotestantismus*' ('cultural Protestantism').²⁶ Analysing the conceptual history of *Kulturprotestantismus*, the German theologian F.W. Graf argues that the term has been used to denote one, or all, of the following three phenomena. First, it is a general byword for (liberal) Protestant theology in Germany between the early nineteenth century and the 1920s, starting with Schleiermacher's intuitive theology of experience and ending with Troeltsch's psychological approach to the history of religion. Second, *Kulturprotestantismus* refers to a particular school within German liberal theology, of which Albrecht Ritschl (1822-1889) was the founder. One of the central arguments in Ritschl's theology is that the truth of a religious thought does not depend on its compatibility with scientific knowledge, but on the value it has in a Christian's life. The life of Jesus as presented in the Gospel, for example, might be non-factual in a scientific sense; it still has value in an ethical sense, in that it reflects ultimate humanity.²⁷ *Die Christliche Welt* (*The Christian World*), issued as an opinion magazine between 1887 and 1941, and the *Vereinigung der Freunde der Christlichen Welt* (*Friends*

25 Colenbrander, *Beknopte geschiedenis van het Christendom* 1, 279. See also: [Van den Bergh], *De Nederlandsche Protestantenvond*, 2-3; Meyboom, *De Nederlandsche Protestantenvond*, 4; Bank and Van Buuren, *Dutch Culture in a European Perspective* III, 319; Buitenwerf-van der Molen, *God van vooruitgang*, 31; J. van Eijnatten, 'Contested Unity. Church, Nation and Reform in the Netherlands', in: J. van Eijnatten and P. Yates (eds.), *The Dynamics of Religious Reform in Northern Europe, 1780-1920* II. *The Churches* (Leuven 2010), 123-152, here 149.

26 Hübinger states that the above-cited aim of the *Protestantenverein* concisely defines *Kulturprotestantismus*. See: Hübinger, *Kulturprotestantismus und Politik*, 1. The English translation is quoted from: K. Fitschen, 'The Protestant Churches in Germany and Ecclesiastical Reform', in: Van Eijnatten and Yates (eds.), *The Dynamics of Religious Reform in Northern Europe, 1780-1920* II, 185-214, here 203.

27 An English-language overview of Ritschl's views is offered in: D.L. Mueller, *An Introduction to the Theology of Albrecht Ritschl* (Philadelphia 1969). See also: Zachhuber, *Zwischen Idealismus und Historismus*.

of the Christian World), established in 1903, provided a platform for those theologians influenced by Ritschl, such as Adolf von Harnack (1851-1930), Martin Rade (1857-1940), and Troeltsch.²⁸ Third, *Kulturprotestantismus* designates the particular kind of piety and social ethics of the *Bildungsbürgertum* (the educated bourgeoisie) in Germany between 1890 and 1918. It refers to an attitude to life in which being a Christian was seen as synonymous with being an intellectually, devotionally, and ethically developed individual.²⁹ All in all, the term '*Kulturprotestantismus*', coined in the 1920s to criticise the optimistic expectation in pre-First World War liberal Protestantism that Christianity and culture would one day be brought into perfect harmony, stands for the whole complex of religious ideas and views on man, the church, the state, society, and morality that were characteristic of the liberal Protestant German bourgeoisie in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.³⁰

As a worldview and outlook on life, *Kulturprotestantismus* involved the following constitutive elements. First, *Kulturprotestantismus* was, theologically speaking, based on historical-critical methodology. Its adherents rejected supernatural interpretations of biblical texts and focused on the ethical implications of Jesus's life and teachings.

Second, the notion of '*Bildung*' was central to *Kulturprotestantismus*. The German word '*Bildung*' is one of those terms that loses some of its meaning when it is translated into a different language. Yet, rendering it as 'spiritual development' is, at least in the context of *Kulturprotestantismus*, probably adequate. Being '*gebildet*' in a '*kulturprotestantische*' sense meant being acquainted with the cultural foundations of Christian civilisation, having a concept of God that does not conflict with reason and stems from one's own inner life, and being able to act in accordance with the inner voice of conscience that tells one what is good and what is not – in sum, it meant having a clear mind, a pious heart, and a strongly developed moral sense, and as such being a truly autonomous *individual*. Those who were most *gebildet* had

28 R. Schmidt-Rost, 'Die Christliche Welt. Eine publizistische Gestalt des Kulturprotestantismus', in: H.M. Müller (ed.), *Kulturprotestantismus. Beiträge zu einer Gestalt des modernen Christentums* (Gütersloh 1992), 245-257; E. Nix, Jr., *Ernst Troeltsch and Comparative Theology* (New York etc. 2010), 38.

29 F.W. Graf, 'Kultprotestantismus. Zur Begriffsgeschichte einer theologiepolitischen Chiffre', in: Müller (ed.), *Kulturprotestantismus*, 21-77, here 22-23.

30 G. Hübinger, 'Kulturprotestantismus, Bürgerkirche und liberaler Revisionismus im wilhelminischen Deutschland', in: W. Schieder (ed.), *Religion und Gesellschaft im 19. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart 1993), 272-299, here 281.

a social duty to guide others in their spiritual development.³¹ As the theologian F. Borggreffe shows in relation to the Rhineland-Palatinate, *Kulturprotestanten* united in the regional *Protestantenverein* considered *Bildung* to be the key to solving the social misery of the time. Contrasting diaconal relief and charity, which provided the underprivileged with basic material needs, with what has been called 'healthful humanitarianism' in chapter 6, these liberal Protestants undertook social initiatives such as community homes and district nursing to help the poor and needy to become self-supporting individuals.³² In her study on the national *Protestantenverein*, the historian C. Lepp also demonstrates that liberal Protestants firmly believed in social reform through *Bildung*.³³

Third, *Kulturprotestantismus* was essentially *bürgerlich* or bourgeois – with regard not only to the class background of its adherents, but also to the values it cultivated.³⁴ Frugality, decency, modest piety, respectability, the ability to support oneself, individuality, and cultural refinement, promoted in *Kulturprotestantismus* through *Bildung*, were all bourgeois values – in fact, the whole idea of *Bildung* came down to the inculcation of what the bourgeoisie regarded as valuable in life.³⁵ For *Kulturprotestanten*, one's social status accordingly depended on one's level of spiritual development – and, by necessity, on one's financial independence or *Besitz*.³⁶ After all, as already explained in chapter 6, one needed the means and time to be able to develop oneself spiritually. When in the late nineteenth century the bourgeois values it fostered came under attack from both a new, anti-bourgeois generation of philosophers, artists and belletrists, and the emerging labour movement, *Kulturprotestantismus* ceased to exert a lasting influence on the intellectual vanguard and the lower classes.³⁷

31 G. Hübinger, 'Drei Generationen deutscher Kulturprotestanten 1860-1918', in: J. Dantine, K. Thien and M. Weinzierl (eds.), *Protestantische Mentalitäten* (Wien 1999), 181-193, here 181-182; D. Pichler, *Bürgertum und Protestantismus. Die Geschichte der Familie Ludwig in Wien und Oberösterreich (1860-1900)* (Wien etc. 2003), 19. See also: R. Preul, 'Aspekte eines kulturprotestantischen Bildungsbegriffs', in: Müller (ed.), *Kulturprotestantismus*, 165-182.

32 F. Borggreffe, 'Liberalismus und soziale Herausforderungen', *Blätter für pfälzische Kirchengeschichte und religiöse Volkskunde* LXXVI (2009), 173-185.

33 C. Lepp, *Protestantisch-liberaler Aufbruch in die Moderne. Der deutsche Protestantenverein in der Zeit der Reichsgründung und des Kulturkampfes* (Gütersloh 1996), esp. 387.

34 E.g.: Lepp, 'Der liberale Südwesten', 28-29.

35 A. Schulz, *Lebenswelt und Kultur des Bürgertums im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (München 2005), 19-20.

36 J. Kocka, 'Das europäische Muster und der deutsche Fall', in: J. Kocka (ed.), *Bürgertum im 19. Jahrhundert 1. Einheit und Vielfalt Europas* (Göttingen 1995), 9-75.

37 Hübinger, *Kulturprotestantismus und Politik*, 75; Hübinger, 'Drei Generationen deutscher Kulturprotestanten', 186-188.

Fourth, *Kulturprotestantismus* usually went hand in hand with political liberalism – unsurprisingly, as the latter was just as infused with bourgeois ideals and ideas as the former. Leading men of the *Protestantenverein* openly supported liberal politics and some of them were even actively engaged in liberal political parties.³⁸

Fifth, *Kulturprotestantismus* was anti-confessionalist. The *Protestantenverein* was therefore first and foremost intended to be an association through which confessionalism could be held in check.³⁹ Since the German state authorities, who heavily interfered in church life, favoured Protestant orthodoxy, the founders of the association urged all liberal-minded Protestants to join forces in order to be strong enough to push for necessary liturgical and organisational reforms. They feared that if endorsement of traditional doctrines continued to be a precondition for obtaining church membership or access to the pulpit, more and more people would eventually leave the churches and fall prey to a materialist outlook on life.⁴⁰

Sixth, *Kulturprotestantismus* was nationalist.⁴¹ The *Protestantenverein* hence opposed confessionalism not only as it manifested itself within Protestantism, but also in its Roman Catholic, ultramontanist form. It did so not only because these movements conflicted with liberal Protestants' own interests, but also because liberal Protestants considered both of them to be onslaughts on German national identity and threats to the welfare of the German nation. Seeing Martin Luther as the one who had laid the foundations of the German national identity, liberal Protestants blamed their orthodox antagonists for failing to differentiate between Luther's conceptual universe and Luther's spirit. Orthodoxy, clinging to the tenets of sixteenth-century Lutheranism, did not take into account the fact that Luther had developed his conception of God and religious imagery in accordance with the scientific and scholarly knowledge of his age, which was primitive compared to nineteenth-century knowledge. Daniel Schenkel (1813-1885), one of the founding fathers of the *Protestantenverein*, accordingly stated in 1868 that he had no doubt whatsoever that Luther, if 'transplanted' directly from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, would revise his religious views: "Luther would say: in many aspects, I was still a child three centuries ago; meanwhile, time has progressed on the

38 Hübinger, *Kulturprotestantismus und Politik*, 75-160; Lepp, *Protestantisch-liberaler Aufbruch in die Moderne*, 360-381; Kirn, 'Protestantenverein', 538.

39 Lepp, *Protestantisch-liberaler Aufbruch in die Moderne*, 40-41.

40 *Ibid.*, 189-193.

41 See in particular: *Ibid.*, 294-319; C. Lepp, 'Protestanten feiern ihre Nation. Die kulturprotestantischen Ursprünge des Sedantages', *Historisches Jahrbuch* CXVIII (1998), 201-222.

waves of development and civilisation." Therefore, liberal Protestants maintained that what really mattered was Luther's attitude of mind rather than his doctrinal positions. They believed that Luther had lived his life in a spirit of tolerance, free piety, and reform- and progress-mindedness. Schenkel was convinced that Luther would have assumed the leadership of the *Protestantenverein*, as it acted in 'his' spirit.⁴² By thus turning Luther, the father of German language and culture, into the spiritual father of *Kulturprotestantismus*, liberal Protestants turned *Kulturprotestantismus* into an essential element of German national identity. Consequently, they regarded Catholicism to be non- and even anti-German. Ultramontanism, which accentuated absolute obedience to the pope and the clergy in all spheres of life and stimulated the institutionalisation of a Roman Catholic subculture in society at large, became the dominant current within Catholicism in the second half of the nineteenth century, in Germany and elsewhere. Both orthodox and liberal Protestants felt that loyalty to the pope and loyalty to the German nation were incompatible, as the papacy was, to quote a prominent member of the *Protestantenverein*, J.C. Bluntschli (1808-1881), "the barrier to all civilisation and the true cause of all civil upheavals in the current age."⁴³ *Kulturprotestanten* therefore supported the German government in its endeavour to counteract a growing Catholic visibility in, and influence on, German social, cultural, and political life during the so-called '*Kulturkampf*' of the 1870s.⁴⁴

Seventh and finally, the ideal of a *Volkskirche*, which was similar to the Dutch ideal of the *volkskerk* as explained in chapter 4, was a constitutive element of *Kulturprotestantismus*. The pursuit of this ideal was directly related to the latter's nationalist character, in that the unification of the German principalities into the German Empire were to find expression in church life. A national *Volkskirche* should replace the existing *Landeskirchen*, each of which had jurisdiction only within the boundaries of one of the old principalities. It had to be based on the principle of doctrinal freedom if it was to include as many citizens as possible, and ought to be the embodiment and guardian of

42 Quoted in: P. Hofstede de Groot, 'Het gedenkteeken te Worms', *Waarheid in Liefde* XXXII.4 (1868), 738-774, here 743. See also: H. Fenske, 'Das Lutherbild des Protestantenvereins im 19. Jahrhundert', *Blätter für pfälzische Kirchengeschichte und religiöse Volkskunde* L (1983), 63-76.

43 Quoted in: J. Becker, *Liberaler Staat und Kirche in der Ära von Reichsgründung und Kulturkampf. Geschichte und Strukturen ihres Verhältnisses in Baden, 1860-1876* (Mainz 1973), 181.

44 Lepp, *Protestantisch-liberaler Aufbruch in die Moderne*, 319-360; C. Metzner, *Johann Caspar Bluntschli. Leben, Zeitgeschehen und Kirchenpolitik 1808-1881* (Frankfurt am Main 2009), 111-154.

German nationality. As the bourgeois *Kulturprotestanten* believed themselves to be the backbone of the German nation, they envisioned this *Volkskirche* as a disseminator of their ideas and values. In order for the *Volkskirche* to be thoroughly embedded in cultural and social life, the *Protestantenverein* wanted to increase lay involvement in ecclesial affairs by striving for the realisation of what its leaders called the ‘*Gemeindeprinzip*’: the focus in church life should be on the self-governing local congregation.⁴⁵

Without further substantiating his claim, the historian H. Paul states in a 2010 article, in which he refers to theology at Leiden University in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, that “allowing for some differences, this liberal theology is best seen as a Dutch version of German *Kulturprotestantismus*.”⁴⁶ Although it would be more precise to equate *Kulturprotestantismus* with Dutch modernism instead of with Dutch liberal theology – after all, *Kulturprotestantismus* and Dutch modernism included liberal theological views, but were not merely currents in theology, as they also included a particular outlook on church, state and society –, a comparison between the seven constitutive elements of *Kulturprotestantismus* and the characteristics of Dutch modernism analysed in the previous chapters shows that Paul’s claim is indeed legitimate. *Kulturprotestanten* and Dutch modernists fully accepted historical-critical methodology as the basis for theological reflection. The former’s discourse of *Bildung* resembles the latter’s discourse of the spiritual aristocracy of tutors. Dutch modernism was just as bourgeois, just as often accompanied by a politically liberal perspective, and just as anti-confessionalist as was *Kulturprotestantismus*. Dutch modernists and German *Kulturprotestanten* were both nationalist in the sense that they promoted national unity, opposing segregation along religious lines (though one has to take into account that in the Netherlands, nationalism lacked the strong political connotations that it had in Germany). Finally, the ideal of the *Volkskirche* that was cherished within the *Protestantenverein* found a counterpart in the ideal of the *volkskerk* in liberal Dutch Reformed circles.

The seven elements spelled out above characterise *Kulturprotestantismus* as it was given shape by the *Protestantenverein* in the second half of the nineteenth century. However, just as discontent with modernism in its original form – ‘old-school modernism’ – began to manifest itself within the Dutch

45 Hübinger, *Kulturprotestantismus und Politik*, 159–165, 230, 263, 307; Lepp, *Protestantisch-liberaler Aufbruch in die Moderne*, 133–282; Kirn, ‘Protestantenverein’, 539; Fitschen, ‘The Protestant Churches in Germany and Ecclesiastical Reform’, 203–204.

46 H.J. Paul, ‘Religion and the Crisis of Historicism. Protestant and Catholic Perspectives’, *Journal of the Philosophy of History* IV (2010), 172–194, here 177.

modernist movement towards the end of the nineteenth century, at the same time objections were being raised against this archetypal form of *Kulturprotestantismus* within the German liberal Protestant community. In fact, those involved with the already-mentioned magazine *Die Christliche Welt* and the *Vereinigung der Freunde der Christlichen Welt* blamed the *Protestantenverein* for aligning itself with a political liberalism that was unable to satisfactorily solve the social question, and hence for making it seem as if *Kulturprotestantismus* had more to do with ecclesial than with social reform.⁴⁷ Feeling that the *Protestantenverein* took the existing social order too much for granted in its endeavour to harmonise Christianity and culture, and stressing that every individual had to internalise the laws of the Kingdom of God as preached by Jesus, contributors to *Die Christliche Welt* like Harnack and Rade actively participated in the so-called '*Evangelisch-soziale Kongreß*' ('Protestant Social Congress'). This platform was created in 1890 to enable theologians with diverse conceptions of God to discuss with each other questions of social reform, particularly the question of how a 'social Christianity' could and should be shaped.⁴⁸ Notwithstanding its initial theologically mixed character, it soon developed into an assembly in which liberal Protestant theologians took the lead – Hübinger accordingly calls the *Evangelisch-soziale Kongreß* one of the three "*Vereinstypen*" of *Kulturprotestantismus*, next to the *Protestantenverein* and the *Freunde der Christlichen Welt*.⁴⁹ While the identification of *Kulturprotestantismus* with a *laissez-faire* liberalism was criticised in the circles of the *Evangelisch-soziale Kongreß* and the *Christliche Welt*, those moving in these circles did not automatically turn towards social democracy. The *Evangelisch-soziale Kongreß* was even explicitly established in opposition to social democracy, which the founders of the *Kongreß* denounced due to the materialistic outlook on life on which it was based.⁵⁰ Most of the individuals involved with

47 F.W. Graf, 'Kulturprotestantismus', in: G. Müller (ed.), *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* xx (Berlin and New York 1990), 230-243, here 234; Graf, 'Kulturprotestantismus', 36-43. In a 1905 article in *De Hervorming*, I. van den Bergh also perceived a lack of interest in social issues in the *Protestantenverein*, arguing that the association therefore failed to attract more support. See: I. van den Bergh, 'De inrichting van den Protestantenbond', *De Hervorming* 1905-04 (28 January 1905), 26-27, here 26.

48 G. Kretschmar, *Der Evangelisch-soziale Kongreß. Der deutsche Protestantismus und die soziale Frage* (Stuttgart 1972), 9, 42-43; V. Drehsen, "Evangelischer Glaube, brüderliche Wohlfahrt und wahre Bildung." Der Evangelisch-soziale Kongreß als sozialetisches und praktisch-theologisches Forum des Kulturprotestantismus im wilhelminischen Kaiserreich (1890-1914), in: Müller (ed.), *Kulturprotestantismus*, 190-229.

49 Hübinger, *Kulturprotestantismus und Politik*, 52.

50 W. Pentz, *Sozialprotestantismus in den USA und Deutschland. Social Gospel und christlich soziale Bewegung bis 1914* (Munich 2005), 126.

the *Kongreß* held a political position somewhere between social democracy and classical liberalism, which could perhaps best be characterised as 'progressive liberal' and which was comparable to the position of the *Vrijzinnig-Democratische Bond* in Dutch politics. Just as in the Netherlands, liberal Protestant ministers who identified with some form of political socialism, either within social democratic or Christian socialist parties, remained a minority in Germany.⁵¹

Kulturprotestanten were not only engaged in initiatives to improve the lives of those on the lowest rungs of the social ladder in Germany, but also in efforts to help whole peoples on a lower rung of the 'ladder of civilisation' than Christian Europeans to become spiritually more developed. While in the Dutch modernist community only a minority eagerly applied the discourse of the spiritual aristocracy of tutors to the field of foreign missions, enthusiasm for missionary activities seems to have been greater among German *Kulturprotestanten*. The *Allgemeine evangelisch-protestantische Missionsverein*, referred to in chapter 10, was established in 1884. Though it was not formally affiliated with any particular theological or ecclesial current, in practice it heavily relied on liberal Protestant support. Regional branches of the *Protestantenverein* like those in Baden and the Palatinate were closely involved with the AEP MV, and so were theologians associated with *Die Christliche Welt* like Harnack, Troeltsch, and Rade.⁵² In the vision of foreign missions of the AEP MV, clear echoes of liberal Protestant discourse could accordingly be heard. The AEP MV did not focus on animists and worshippers of nature in inner Africa, the inland of South America, or remote islands in South Asia, but on those Asian peoples who had already reached a certain level of civilisation and spiritual development: the Chinese and the Japanese. It did so based on the conviction that if the more civilised non-Christian peoples entered into the spiritual sphere of influence of Christianity, less civilised non-Christian peoples would in due course follow their example. Missionaries of the AEP MV did not want to push the Chinese and Japanese into accepting particular doctrines, but rather wanted to help East Asians acquire a Christian spirit by internalising the prin-

51 Hübinger, *Kulturprotestantismus und Politik*, 63–74.

52 J. Jantsch, 'Einleitung', in: A. von Harnack and M. Rade (J. Jantsch ed.), *Der Briefwechsel zwischen Adolf von Harnack und Martin Rade. Theologie auf dem öffentlichen Markt* (Berlin and New York 1996), 5–130, here 89; G. Stüber, 'Liberalismus und Mission am Beispiel der Ostasienmission, 1884–1900', *Blätter für pfälzische Kirchengeschichte und religiöse Volkskunde* LXXVI (2009), 151–171, here 163, 167; J.U. Mack, *Menschenbilder. Anthropologische Konzepte und stereotype Vorstellungen vom Menschen in der Publizistik der Basler Mission 1816–1914* (Zürich 2013), 63.

ciples of life reflected in (the liberal Protestant image of) Jesus. They tried to do so by looking for 'elements of truth' in Chinese and Japanese religion and culture that they could link up with their own liberal Protestant outlook on, and attitude to, life. Comparative study of religion was therefore regarded as a crucial element in the training of a missionary.⁵³ As noted in chapter 10, some Dutch modernists considered the AEPMV an example to be followed, but their numbers, as well as those of modernist champions of foreign missions in general, remained small. That German liberal Protestants were more involved with foreign missions than Dutch modernists had most likely to do with the former's more politically charged nationalist views and related sympathy for the imperialist politics of the German government: conducting missions was not only a means to spread liberal Christian civilisation, but also a way to expand the *German* sphere of influence in the world.⁵⁴

From the foregoing review of the way in which the organised liberal Protestant movement in Germany developed from its emergence in the third quarter of the nineteenth century until the outbreak of the Second World War as a whole, strong parallels become visible with the history of the modernist movement in the Netherlands during the same period. The zeal and self-confidence with which the organised liberal Protestant movement was permeated during its formative phase evolved into a feeling of disappointment towards the end of the nineteenth century.⁵⁵ Just like the NPB, the *Protestantenverein* fell short of its founders' expectations: it only managed to frustrate orthodox attempts to purge the *Landeskirchen* of liberal elements without achieving thoroughgoing ecclesial reforms, while its numerical growth remained rather modest. The number of local and regional branches affiliated with the *Protestantenverein* was 125 in 1875, went down to 25 in 1890, and further diminished to merely 15 in 1908.⁵⁶ The membership of the *Protestantenverein*, numbering 7,500 in 1878, contrariwise continued to grow until approximately 1910, when it reached

53 R.H. Wippich, 'Christliche Mission und Kulturimperialismus. Aufbau und Entwicklung der deutschen protestantischen Missionstätigkeit in der Meiji-Zeit', in: H. Gössmann and A. Mrugalla (eds.), *11. Deutschsprachiger Japanologentag in Trier 1999* 1. *Geschichte, Politik, Recht, Wirtschaft* (Münster etc. 1999), 51-61, here 51-52; Stüber, 'Liberalismus und Mission am Beispiel der Ostasienmission', 153-154; Mack, *Menschenbilder*, 63-66.

54 Th. Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte, 1866-1918* 1. *Arbeitswelt und Bürgergeist* (München 1994), 489-490; Th. Heese, 'Das koloniale Osnabrück', in: U. van der Heyden and J. Zeller (eds.), *Kolonialismus hierzulande. Eine Spurensuche in Deutschland* (Erfurt 2008), 40-47, here 44; Wippich, 'Christliche Mission', 52.

55 Dealt with more exhaustively in: T.E.M. Krijger, "Made in Germany." Dutch Liberal Protestantism and its Relationship with German-Speaking Europe until 1940' [forthcoming].

56 Kirn, 'Protestantenverein', 539.

a peak number between 20,000 and 50,000.⁵⁷ This increase, which should be attributed to the circumstance that the *Protestantenverein* was the most ardent champion of doctrinal freedom in German church life and called attention to itself by siding with liberal ministers in highly-publicised disciplinary cases – such as those of C.W. Jatho (1851-1913) and Gottfried Traub (1869-1956) –, ought not to obscure the fact that the association failed to reinvigorate the organised liberal Protestant movement in Germany. It had to hand over its role as the flagship of *Kulturprotestantismus* to the group around *Die Christliche Welt* – qualitatively more so than quantitatively. Whereas almost 5,000 individuals had a subscription to this magazine in 1910, the membership of the association founded around it was as low as 860 in 1904 and only 1,415 nine years later.⁵⁸ Due to a system of co-optation, the *Freunde der Christlichen Welt* remained a platform of theologians and ministers, as did the *Evangelisch-soziale Kongreß*, which had 1,950 supporters in 1913.⁵⁹

Disappointment with the failure of *Kulturprotestantismus* to satisfactorily harmonise Christianity and culture led some to develop occultist outlooks on life and alternative lifestyles, such as those dealt with in chapter 5. Hübinger even sees Anthroposophy and the *Lebensreformbewegung* as offshoots of *Kulturprotestantismus*: they were rooted in the latter's individual-centred spirituality while criticising its bourgeois values.⁶⁰ An even bigger problem for the organisations giving shape to *Kulturprotestantismus* than the attraction that the little religions exerted on a tiny minority of liberal Protestants was their inability to 'reinvent' themselves after the First World War, which gave the deathblow to the cultural optimism and values of the *Bildungsbürgertum* that were so characteristic of *Kulturprotestantismus*. They therefore quickly lost significance in the interwar period.⁶¹ The remnants of the *Protestantenverein* and the *Freunde der Christlichen Welt* that survived the Second World War merged together with several smaller associations that had emerged in the 1910s and

57 D. Menzel, *Liberale Religionspädagogik und freier Protestantismus. Das Beispiel Hans Schlemmer (1885-1958)* (München 2001), 48. Hübinger says that the *Protestantenverein* had 50,000 members in 1908, while Petersen states that it only had 20,000 to 30,000 members in 1913. See: Hübinger, *Kulturprotestantismus und Politik*, 54; E. Petersen, 'Protestantenverein', in: F.M. Schiele and L. Zscharnack (eds.), *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* IV (Tübingen 1913), 1894-1899, here 1898.

58 Hübinger, 'Kulturprotestantismus, Bürgerkirche und liberaler Revisionismus', 293; Hübinger, *Kulturprotestantismus und Politik*, 53.

59 *Ibid.*

60 Hübinger, 'Drei Generationen deutscher Kulturprotestanten', 190.

61 *Die Christliche Welt* had only 3,000 subscribers left in the interwar period. See: S. Knappenberger-Jans, *Verlagspolitik und Wissenschaft. Der Verlag J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck) im frühen 20. Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden 2001), 545.

1920s either as less church-oriented alternatives to the *Protestantenverein* or due to discontent with the progressive liberal orientation of *Die Christliche Welt*, into the *Deutsche Bund für freies Christentum* (German League for Free Christianity) in 1948.⁶²

3 France

In France, an organised liberal Protestant movement came into being in 1861. That year, eighteen members of the Reformed congregation in Paris founded the *Union protestante libérale* (Liberal Protestant Union) in response to the unwillingness of the orthodox majority in their congregation to appoint ministers with a theologically liberal orientation.⁶³ Just as many NPB branches would do, the *Union* put forward liberal-minded candidates during the elections of elders, and organised religious services as an alternative to existing church services. It continued to exist until May 1874, when a new, more tightly organised body, the *Comité libéral de l'église réformée de Paris* (Liberal Committee of the Reformed Church of Paris), took over its role as assembly point for Reformed liberals in Paris.⁶⁴ In 1872, liberal-oriented congregations all over France established the *Délégation libérale des églises réformées de France* (Liberal Delegation of the Reformed Churches of France), which basically functioned as the unofficial synod of these congregations.⁶⁵ Due to its efforts, the Reformed congregation in Paris was subdivided into 'neighbourhood parishes' – a measure implemented in order to end quarrels between orthodoxy and liberals, and, as shown in chapter 4, also proposed by some modernists in the Dutch Reformed Church – and several liberal-oriented professors were appointed to the theological faculties in Montauban and Paris.⁶⁶ According to

62 Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III, 128; Kirn, 'Protestantenverein', 541; A. Knuth, *Der Protestantismus als moderne Religion. Historisch-systematische Rekonstruktion der religionsphilosophischen Theologie Kurt Leesers (1887-1965)* (Frankfurt am Main 2005), 105; R. Bultmann, *Rudolf Bultmann. Eine Biographie* (Tübingen 2012), 148-149.

63 F. De Coninck, *L'Union protestante libérale* (Le Havre 1861).

64 A. Encrevé, 'Les protestants à Paris à la fin du XIX^e siècle', *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Français* CLIV (2008), 351-382, here 364-366.

65 According to Harismendy, the *Délégation libérale* was the successor to the *Union protestante libérale*. See: P. Harismendy, 'Séparation et désétablissement. Les concours d'un objet historique', *Ibid.* CLI (2005), 549-564, here 551.

66 Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III, 142; M. Scheidhauer, 'La création de la Faculté de Théologie Protestante de Paris (1877)', *Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses* LVII.3 (1977), 291-325, here 319-320.

Lindeboom, some French Calvinists who self-identified as 'liberals' had theological views closely resembling those of Dutch *evangelischen*, while others were of the same mind as Dutch modernists.⁶⁷

Among the latter, several had a connection to the Netherlands. A.J. Coquerel, Jr., for example, was born in Amsterdam, where his father was the minister of the Walloon Reformed congregation at the time. After studying theology in Geneva and Strasbourg, he became an assistant minister in the French town of Nîmes and subsequently in Paris. In 1864, the orthodox majority in the Reformed church council of Paris decided to deny him access to the pulpit: Coquerel was involved with the *Union protestante libérale* and had written a favourable review of *Vie de Jésus (Life of Jesus)*, whose author Ernest Renan (1823-1892), following D.F. Strauss, attempted to reconstruct the life of Jesus 'as it had truly been'. Just like Dutch Reformed liberals would do by founding vvH branches in the early twentieth century, Coquerel and the liberal-minded Reformed Parisians who supported him organised religious services of their own without resigning their membership in the local Reformed congregations. Moreover, just as his fellow modernists from the Netherlands, he demonstrated that liberal Protestantism wanted to be both an ecclesial and a social reform movement by engaging in activities contributing to the spiritual development of lower-class individuals.⁶⁸ Other leading French modern theologians with a Dutch link were Albert Réville and his son Jean (1854-1908). Albert was the minister of the Walloon Reformed congregation in Rotterdam from 1851 to 1872. He may have gone to the Netherlands out of interest in the modern theological school that was emerging there.⁶⁹ Writing about Dutch modern theology in French, even translating some of J.H. Scholten's and C.P. Tiele's publications into his native language during his time in Rotterdam, Albert Réville played a vital role in connecting French *protestantisme libéral* and Dutch modernism.⁷⁰ Jean Réville, a son-in-law of Coquerel, kept in touch with Dutch modern theologians as well; he corresponded with Tiele and Kuenen.⁷¹

67 Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III, 143.

68 E. Stroehlin, *Athanase Coquerel fils. Étude biographique* (Paris 1886), 287-311, 329, 334-335; Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* II, 127-128.

69 I. Strenski, *Theology and the First Theory of Sacrifice* (Leiden and Boston 2003), 128-131.

70 As Vanderlaan states, Réville was "for long an actual part of the Dutch [modernist] movement." Quoted from: E.C. Vanderlaan, *Protestant Modernism in Holland* (London etc. 1924), 119.

71 A.L. Molendijk, 'At the Cross-Roads. Early Dutch Science of Religion in International Perspective', in: S. Hjelde (ed.), *Man, Meaning, and Mystery. Hundred Years of History of Religions in Norway: The Heritage of W. Brede Kristensen* (Leiden, Boston and Cologne 2000), 19-56, here 46; UBL BPL 3028.

In 1872, the first year since 1659 in which the Reformed churches in France were allowed to convene a national synod, the paths of orthodoxy and liberals parted. Afterwards, both groups organised, without government recognition, synods of their own. Subsequently, decades of rivalry within the French Reformed community followed, with both groups trying to strengthen their own positions in church life and with the government taking measures that alternately, depending on the political situation of the moment, affected the liberals, the orthodox, or both. It was a government measure that ultimately led to the permanent institutionalisation of the split in French Reformed Protestantism. Before 1905, Roman Catholicism, Lutheranism, Calvinism, and Judaism had been the only religions in France with government recognition, thanks to which communities belonging to one of these religions had received state support for the maintenance of their church buildings and for the training of their clergy. The Protestant theological faculty in Paris, for example, had been paid for by the government. In 1905, however, with the promulgation of the law separating church and state, this state support came to an end. Now, every congregation in France had to apply for the status of an *association culturelle* (religious association) to keep possession of its church building. Orthodox Reformed congregations applying for this status joined forces in the *Union nationale des Églises réformées évangéliques* (National Union of Evangelical Reformed Churches) in 1906. That same year, in Jarnac, a small town in the department of Charente, a group assembled that tried to restore the unity of the French Reformed community. However, the orthodox *évangéliques* congregations rejected the Jarnac initiative, while the most radical liberals, among them Jean Réville, decided to stand aloof as well and established the *Union nationale des Églises réformées unies* (National Union of United Reformed Churches) in April 1907. The latter group's adherents were not willing to give up their right to preach as they wanted to for the sake of ecclesial unity. The congregations supporting the Jarnac initiative had no other choice than to form yet a third Reformed ecclesial body, the *Union nationale des Églises réformées* (National Union of Reformed Churches), in June 1907. When this body made clear that it would not impose restrictions on liberal ministers in any way, the liberal *églises réformées unies* merged with it in 1912. From then on, a separately organised liberal Protestant movement, striving for doctrinal freedom, was no longer needed in French church life.⁷² The theologically most radical liberal

72 Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* 111, 137-152; A. Encrevé, 'Le XIX^e siècle', in: H. Dubief and J. Poujol (eds.), *La France protestante. Histoire et lieux de mémoire* (Paris 1996), 115-144, here 131-140; J. Baubérot, 'Le XX^e siècle', in: Dubief and Poujol (eds.), *La France protestante*, 145-165, here 148-149; P. Cabanel, *Histoire des protestants en France (XVI^e-XXI^e siècle)* (Paris 2012), 961-966.

Reformed ministers continued to occasionally meet within the framework of the *association fraternelle des pasteurs libéraux de France* (French Fellowship of Liberal Ministers), more or less resembling the Dutch meetings of modern theologians, until 1938, as they had since 1885.⁷³

Ever since its emergence in the 1850s, the liberal current remained rather small within French Protestantism, itself already a tiny minority in France.⁷⁴ If the numbers of congregations affiliated to one of the three *unions nationales* constituted in 1906 and 1907 are taken as an indication of the balance of power within French Protestantism around 1900, then orthodoxy clearly had the upper hand: the orthodox union consisted of 440 congregations, while the liberal union only comprised 100 congregations, and the number of congregations belonging to the 'Jarnac' union, the union of those who felt that the theological differences between the orthodox and the liberals should not tear the French Reformed community apart, was as low as 80.⁷⁵ However, in the late nineteenth century, the influence liberal Protestantism exerted outside of church life was bigger than its low numbers might suggest. It did certainly not attract 'intellectuals', as defined in chapter 8, in large numbers, and it seems to have become a less important force in intellectual and political life over time. But liberal Protestantism did help to shape the intellectual and political climate during the first three decades of the French Third Republic.⁷⁶ After 1870, the year in which Emperor Napoleon III (1808-1873) was dethroned, some leading republican politicians, most notably Jules Favre (1809-1880), Jules Simon (1814-1896), and Jules Ferry (1832-1893), showed liberal Protestant sympathies. Several liberal Protestants were in their circle of acquaintances and advisors.⁷⁷ Later Nobel Peace Prize laureate Ferdinand Buisson (1841-1932), to name only the most well-known liberal Protestant active in French politics, contributed

73 P.Y. Kirschleger, 'L'Association fraternelle des pasteurs libéraux de France', *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Français* CLIV (2008), 383-396.

74 Since the eighteenth century, Protestants have only constituted two to three percent of the French population. See: Cabanel, *Histoire des protestants en France*, 9.

75 *Ibid.*, 964. Though many Reformed congregations did not, or at least not immediately, join any of these three groups. Moreover, some congregations were simultaneously affiliated with the liberal and 'Jarnac' unions. See: Baubérot, 'Le xx^e siècle', 148; Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III, 150, note 4.

76 D. Robert, 'Les intellectuels d'origine non-protestante dans le protestantisme des débuts de la Troisième République', in: A. Encrevé and M. Richard (eds.), *Actes du colloque 'Les protestants dans les débuts de la Troisième République (1871-1885)' (Paris, 3-6 octobre 1978)* (Paris 1979), 91-98, here 93-94, 98; P. Nord, *The Republican Moment. Struggles for Democracy in Nineteenth-Century France* (London 1995), 90-114.

77 J.M. Gaillard, *Jules Ferry* (Paris 1989), 148-150; P. Pierrard, *Les Chrétiens et l'affaire Dreyfus* (Paris 1998), 11; P. Cabanel, *Le Dieu de la République. Aux sources protestantes de la laïcité (1860-1900)* (Rennes 2003).

to the realisation of the republican ideal of *laïcité*: he championed, and was involved with, the construction of a public educational system in which religious instruction was forbidden – a system intended to attack the social power of the Roman Catholic Church – and the separation of church and state. In public opinion at large, liberal Protestant voices were sometimes among the most prominent ones: Albert Réville, for example, got involved in the famous controversy surrounding the conviction of Alfred Dreyfus (1859–1935), a Jewish officer who was unjustly accused of spying for Germany.⁷⁸

Just as in the Netherlands, the grand majority of liberal Protestants in France belonged to the bourgeois or cultured class.⁷⁹ Liberal Protestantism did not reach the masses and failed to become a major source of influence in the labour movement. Some have nonetheless regarded the cause of liberal Protestantism – furthering the free spiritual development of every individual – and the cause of socialism – guaranteeing every individual a humane existence – to be two sides of the same coin. Buisson, for instance, developed in a politically socialist direction, even representing a radical-socialist party in parliament in the early twentieth century.⁸⁰ The French Reformed theologians Charles Wagner (1852–1918), Élie Gounelle (1865–1950), and Wilfred Monod (1867–1943), who were counted among liberals yet were theologically more moderate than modernists in the proper sense such as Albert and Jean Réville – the fact that the three of them were the driving forces behind the Jarnac initiative accentuates the point⁸¹ –, were ardent advocates of Christian socialism in France.⁸² Instead of actually connecting the liberal Protestant and labour movements, however, French liberal Protestant socialist ministers merely became a faction among both liberal Protestants and among socialists – a fate they shared with the *Blijde Wereld* ministers.⁸³ As the labour movement in France was initially

78 A. Encrevé, 'Les protestants républicains peuvent-ils être des modérés entre 1870 et 1905?', in: J. Prévotat et J. Vavasseur-Despierre (eds.), *Les "chrétiens modérés" en France et en Europe, 1870-1960* (Villeneuve d'Ascq 2013), 63–78, here 75–78.

79 Gaillard, *Jules Ferry*, 149.

80 S. Tomei, 'Ferdinand Buisson, protestantisme libéral et radical-socialisme', in: S. Baumont and A. Dorna (eds.), *Les grands figures du radicalisme. Les radicaux dans le siècle 1901-2001* (Toulouse 2001), 117–122, here 120. The Dutch progressive liberal *Vrijzinnig-Democratische Bond* was a sister party of Buisson's *Parti Républicain, Radical et Radical-Socialiste*. See: Klijnsma, *Om de democratie*, 264–267, 578.

81 S. Fath, *Du ghetto au réseau. Le protestantisme évangélique en France, 1800-2005* (Geneva 2005), 143, note 46.

82 Cabanel, *Le Dieu de la République*, 209.

83 Within French Protestantism as a whole, Christian socialism remained a marginal phenomenon. See: J. Baubérot, 'Tommy Fallot et ses continuateurs Élie Gounelle et Wilfred Monod. La fondation du Christianisme social', in: M. Barot et al. (eds.), *Itinéraires socialistes chrétiens* (Geneva 1983), 15–31, here 20.

just as anti-religious as in the Netherlands, and since the French liberal Protestant community was just as bourgeois as the Dutch modernist movement, the same reasons that explain why liberal Protestantism failed to gain support among blue-collar workers in the Netherlands most likely also apply to France.

4 Switzerland

Just like those in the Netherlands, liberal Protestants in other countries founded associations patterned after the *Protestantenverein*. Because Tübingen, the German cradle of modern theology, was nearby and was part of the same language area, German-speaking Switzerland proved to be fertile ground for liberal theological views. As of the 1850s, most professors at the theological faculties were teaching such views to their students, who, after graduation, began to preach these views from their pulpits. In Swiss Protestantism, at least among theologians and ministers, liberalism accordingly became the dominant current.⁸⁴ Orthodoxy, as elsewhere, did not simply reconcile itself to this situation. Liberal attempts to render subscription to church creeds optional came up against a wall of orthodox resistance in particular.⁸⁵ When one of the champions of such an ecclesial reform, the Swiss Reformed minister E.F. Langhans (1829-1880), was threatened with disciplinary measures by the highest ecclesial authority in the Reformed Church in the canton of Bern, he and his sympathisers joined forces in the *Kirchliche Reformverein des Kantons Bern* (Ecclesial Reform Association of the Canton of Bern) in 1866.⁸⁶ Liberal Protestants in other Swiss cantons, anticipating rather than combatting orthodox antagonism, founded associations of their own as well, such as the *Aargauische Reformverein* (Reform Association of the Canton of Aargau) in 1868, and the *Religiös-liberale Verein des Kantons Sankt Gallen* (Religious-Liberal Association

84 U. Altermatt, F. Metzger and M. Wintle, 'Protestant Dominance and Confessional Politics. Switzerland and the Netherlands', in: S. Gilley and B. Stanley (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Christianity VIII. World Christianities, c. 1815-c. 1914* (Cambridge etc. 2006), 323-341, here 327-328.

85 E. Campi, 'Kirche und Theologie im Zürich des 19. Jahrhunderts', in: E. Campi, R. Kunz and Chr. Moser (eds.), *Alexander Schweizer (1808-1888) und seine Zeit* (Zürich 2008), 59-76, here 73.

86 G. Schönholzer, *Die religiöse Reformbewegung in der reformierten Schweiz. Denkschrift dem Schweizerischen Verein für freies Christentum gewidmet zum Gedächtnis seines 25jährigen Bestehens bei Anlaß der XIII. Generalversammlung am 7./8. September 1896 in Bern* (Zürich 1896), 28. The *Reformverein* was meant to be a faithful copy of the German *Protestantenverein*. See: G. Koffmane, *Abriss der Kirchengeschichte des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts* (Erlangen 1887), 141.

of the Canton of Sankt Gallen) in 1870.⁸⁷ At the instigation of the Sankt Gallen minister C.W. Kambli (1829-1914), the Basel minister A. Altherr (1843-1918), and the Bern minister A. Bitzium (1835-1882), the last of whom had been involved with the founding of the *Reformverein* in his home canton in 1866, a national union of those cantonal associations came into being in 1871.⁸⁸ This *Schweizerischer Verein für freies Christentum* (Swiss Association for Free Christianity) aimed at "popularising and advancing religious-liberal aspirations in our fatherland, modernising ecclesial doctrines and structures, [and] purifying the religious conceptions of our people in order to strengthen religious-moral life [in Switzerland] by educating them through the spoken and the written word."⁸⁹ Under the flag of the *Verein*, liberal Protestants who had not yet done so decided to organise themselves on the cantonal level as well, for example in Appenzell Ausserrhoden in 1887.⁹⁰ As church life in Switzerland was organised along cantonal lines, liberal Protestants in the one canton accomplished more reforms than those in another. For instance, liberal Protestants in the canton of Geneva – a region where, because of its Francophone character, the *Verein für freies Christentum* was not represented⁹¹ – managed to get doctrinal freedom sanctioned in their cantonal church body.⁹² However, the other cantons in French-speaking Switzerland were generally more orthodox than those in the German-speaking part of the country.⁹³

Like their kindred spirits elsewhere, the majority of liberal Protestants in Switzerland belonged to the bourgeoisie and had politically liberal leanings.⁹⁴ Also, like the former, they never managed to win over the masses to liberal

87 'Reformtag in Flawyl und Biel', *Allgemeine kirchliche Chronik* XVIII (1871), 6-8, here 6; R. Pfister, *Kirchengeschichte der Schweiz* III. Von 1720 bis 1950 (Zürich 1985), 264.

88 C. Nöthiger-Strahm, *Der deutschschweizerische Protestantismus und der Landesstreik von 1918. Die Auseinandersetzung der Kirche mit der sozialen Frage zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Bern etc. 1981), 85.

89 Quoted in: L. Vischer, L. Schenker and R. Dellsperger (eds.), *Ökumenische Kirchengeschichte der Schweiz* (Freiburg and Basel 1998), 238. The *Reformverein* in Bern and the other cantonal associations of liberal Protestants continued to exist as such, albeit as branches of the *Verein für freies Christentum*. See: Ph.A. von Segesser (V. Conzemius and S. Köppendörfer eds.), *Briefwechsel Philipp Anton von Segesser (1817-1888) v. 1869-1872* (Zürich and Cologne 1992), 203.

90 Schonholzer, *Die religiöse Reformbewegung*, 39.

91 Pfister says cantonal organisations of liberal Protestants in French-speaking *Westschweiz* did not join the *Verein für freies Christentum*. See: Pfister, *Kirchengeschichte der Schweiz* III, 264. See also: Schönholzer, *Die religiöse Reformbewegung*, 34-37.

92 Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* II, 134-135.

93 P.W. Snyder, 'Theological Instruction in Switzerland I', *The Biblical World* 1.2 (February 1893), 109-118, here 111.

94 'Buitenland – Geestverwanten in Zwitserland', *De Hervorming* 1887-27 (2 July 1887), 107; Altermatt, Metzger and Wintle, 'Protestant Dominance and Confessional Politics', 328.

Protestantism in their pursuit of social reform. Confronted with the emerging labour movement, particularly two of the founding fathers of the *Verein für freies Christentum*, the already-mentioned ministers Bitzjus and Kambli, felt that solving the social question was the vocation, the duty even, of liberal Protestantism. According to Kambli, Bitzjus considered social issues to be more pressing than theological and ecclesial ones. He saw that blue-collar workers were emancipating themselves – they were tired of waiting for the churches to come to their rescue and were taking the improvement of their lot into their own hands. Bitzjus regarded this as a positive process, yet was fearful of class antagonism: liberal Protestants should sympathise with blue-collar workers and help them to become independent citizens, but without reinforcing their class-consciousness. He therefore rejected engagement in politics that advanced only working-class interests – such politics set one class apart from the others and thus kept the existing gap between classes intact. Kambli, on the other hand, thought that liberal Protestants could engage in socialist politics, although personally he felt unable to do so under the banner of a social democratic party, due to the materialistic and atheistic principles on which that party was based. However, he emphasised that socialism as such was not inherently materialistic and atheistic: because socialism and liberal Protestantism both tried to free the individual from the chains that hindered him in his personal development – the chains of Mammon in the case of the former, the chains of dogmas in the case of the latter –, Kambli maintained that both belonged together. Social democratic parties should realise that the social question was a religious question, while liberal Protestants should come to see that social reform could never be accomplished without structural changes to the fabric of society.⁹⁵

In her study on Swiss Protestantism and the social question around 1900, the historian Nöthiger-Strahm calls Kambli “the theologian who has done pioneering work for that undercurrent in liberal theology that intensively concerned itself with social issues.”⁹⁶ As such, he and Bitzjus both preceded and fostered the emergence of religious socialism in Switzerland in the early twentieth century.⁹⁷ One of the two leading men of Swiss religious socialism, L. Ragaz (1868-1945), had a liberal Protestant background; the other, H. Kutter (1863-1931), was theologically orthodox. Swiss religious socialists considered

95 Nöthiger-Strahm, *Der deutschschweizerische Protestantismus*, 114-120; Th. Widmer, *Die Schweiz in der Wachstumskrise der 1880er Jahre* (Zürich 1992), 184.

96 Nöthiger-Strahm, *Der deutschschweizerische Protestantismus*, 116.

97 *Ibid.*, 115, 119; K. Guggisberg, *Albert Bitzjus 1835-1882. Wesen und Werk* (Bern 1935), 78; M. Mattmüller, *Leonhard Ragaz und der religiöse Sozialismus: eine Biographie 1. Die Entwicklung der Persönlichkeit und des Werkes bis ins Jahr 1913* (Zürich 1957), 44.

the notion of the Kingdom of God to be central to Christianity, which was, as such, not a revolutionary thought. However, contrary to what both orthodox and liberal Protestants generally believed at the time, they did not look at contemporary society as progressing towards the fulfilment of the Kingdom of God, but rather as *hindering* this fulfilment. There was no consensus among them regarding the question of which political consequences should result from this claim. Some, grouped around Kutter, saw social democratic parties as scourges with which God called the bourgeoisie to account for its lack of social concern, but simultaneously maintained that ministers should not become involved with these parties, given their materialistic outlook on life. The Kingdom of God would never be realised through the activities of a particular political party, let alone one in which the Word of God was disavowed. Other Swiss religious socialists, represented by Ragaz, contrariwise felt that, although they lacked an explicitly religious basis, social democratic parties furthered the ideal of social justice implied in the notion of the Kingdom of God, and were therefore convinced that ministers had a duty to join them.⁹⁸

Notwithstanding Kambli's and Bitzius's role as predecessors, and Ragaz's role as one of the leaders of Swiss religious socialism, the number of liberal Protestant ministers who involved themselves in socialist politics, among them Paul Brandt (1852-1910) and Paul Pflüger (1865-1947), remained rather small.⁹⁹ With regard to their influence and numerical strength, they had a position in Swiss liberal Protestantism similar to the one the *Blijde Wereld* ministers had in the Dutch modernist movement. Moreover, the influence of liberal Protestantism within the Swiss religious socialist movement gradually diminished – as of the mid-1920s, the latter movement became permeated with Karl Barth's neo-orthodox theology, which was highly critical of liberal Protestantism.¹⁰⁰

98 G.J. Dorrien, *Theology without Weapons. The Barthian Revolt in Modern Theology* (Louisville 2000), 39-41; A. Rich, *Business and Economic Ethics. The Ethics of Economic Systems* (Leuven 2006), 130-133; B.L. McCormack, *Theologische Dialektik und kritischer Realismus. Entstehung und Entwicklung von Karl Barths Theologie 1909-1936* (Zürich 2006), 117-118.

99 Mattmüller, *Leonhard Ragaz* 1, 45-46. See also: F. Mauthner, *Der Atheismus und seine Geschichte im Abendlande* IV (Stuttgart and Berlin 1923), 378-379.

100 McCormack, *Theologische Dialektik und kritischer Realismus*, 123; G. Hunsinger, *Conversational Theology. Essays on Ecumenical, Postliberal and Political Themes, with Special Reference to Karl Barth* (London etc. 2015), 180. In French-speaking Switzerland, both liberal Protestantism and religious socialism received less support than in the (larger) German-speaking part of the country. See: E. Rochat, 'The Condition of Liberal Protestantism in Romance Switzerland', in: Wendte (ed.), *Freedom and Fellowship in Religion*, 173-183, here 173-174; F. van Oirschot, *Beknopte geschiedenis der sociale kwestie. Ontstaan en oplossingen* (Roermond 1950), 284.

5 Alsace-Lorraine

In 1871, while at war with France, an alliance of German principalities unified into a single state, proclaiming the King of Prussia as the Emperor of unitary Germany. As 'spoils of war', Germany annexed the French region of Alsace and the easternmost part of the French region of Lorraine later that year. This event induced liberal Protestants living in these annexed regions to establish an organisation defending their interests in church life. Together with Languedoc in the south, Poitou-Charentes in the upper southwest, and Normandy in the northwest, Alsace and East Lorraine were the regions in France with relatively high concentrations of Protestants. Due to the proximity of the theological faculty in Strasbourg, which, contrary to the other French Protestant faculty in Montauban, was receptive to modern theology, Alsace and East Lorraine were hotbeds of *liberal* Protestantism: graduates from the faculty in Strasbourg easily found their way into pulpits of the congregations in the surrounding area.¹⁰¹ Yet, the changed political situation threatened liberals' position: the German prime minister Otto von Bismarck (1815-1898) wanted to bring church life in Alsace-Lorraine into conformity with that in Germany. The German government was known for favouring orthodoxy, causing the liberal Protestant editors of the opinion magazine *Le Progrès Religieux* (*Religious Progress*) to call for action. On their initiative, the *Union évangélique protestante d'Alsace et de Lorraine* (Evangelical Protestant Union of Alsace and Lorraine), which intended "to further the [free] development of religious life in the Protestant churches of Alsace-Lorraine, to make possible the advancement of the Christian truth in a liberal sense, and to fight against religious intolerance everywhere," came into being in July 1871.¹⁰² It was rechristened '*Union protestante libérale d'Alsace et de Lorraine*' ('Liberal Protestant Union of Alsace and Lorraine') at the end of 1873, probably because the adjective '*évangélique*' was too much associated with orthodoxy in both the French and the German languages.¹⁰³ Contrary to liberal Protestants in France proper, those in Alsace-Lorraine were predominantly Lutheran.

An analysis of *Le Progrès Religieux*, issued since 1868 and similar to *De Hervorming* both in tone and content, shows that Alsatian liberal Protest-

101 F. Hartweg, 'Protestantismus in Elsass-Lothringen', in: M. Grunewald, U. Puschner and H.M. Bock (eds.), *Das evangelische Intellektuellenmilieu in Deutschland, seine Presse und seine Netzwerke (1871-1963) – Le milieu intellectuel protestant en Allemagne, sa presse et ses réseaux (1871-1963)* (Bern 2008), 73-94, here 75-79.

102 'Strasbourg, le 5 août 1871', *Le Progrès Religieux* IV.31 (5 August 1871), 241-242, here 241. See also: [Preface], *Ibid.* IV.30 (29 July 1871), 237; A.J. Steinhoff, *The Gods of the City. Protestantism and Religious Culture in Strasbourg, 1870-1914* (Leiden and Boston 2008), 55-82.

103 'Strasbourg, le 22 novembre 1873', *Le Progrès Religieux* VI.47 (22 November 1873), 370.

ants were engaged in similar discussions as were contemporary Dutch modernists. They were equally preoccupied with finding answers to the questions of how to define 'liberal Protestantism'; how to shape church life in such a way that liberals would no longer be obstructed by their orthodox antagonists, whilst also enjoying opportunities to influence the latter; how to relate liberal Protestantism to the little religions; how to uplift the lower classes; how to manifest themselves in social life; and how to civilise non-Christians in the colonial world. Just as in the Netherlands, a certain disappointment made itself felt among liberal Protestants in Alsace-Lorraine when it turned out that initial expectations had not been met: while they initially boasted of being the bearers of the true Protestant spirit, having no doubt whatsoever of accomplishing a second Reformation in church and society, in the 1870s they gradually became less confident that the future was theirs, complaining about increasing indifference – also in their own circles – and a lack of numerical growth as of the 1880s.¹⁰⁴ The discourse of the spiritual aristocracy of tutors was also used in *Le Progrès Religieux*. In many articles, it was argued that social reform could only be brought about if lower-class individuals were helped to become spiritually more developed. Given this perspective, the emergence of socialism, with its plea for changes in the fabric of society without individual reform, its materialistic outlook on life, and its anti-religious tendencies, was observed with concern by the journals.¹⁰⁵

Although this diffident attitude towards socialism was not accompanied by overt support for a different political current, the historian Steinhoff, in his study on Protestantism in Strasbourg during the period of German rule over Alsace, argues that the *Union protestante libérale*, of which *Le Progrès Religieux* was the mouthpiece, was established to "protect liberal church and political interests."¹⁰⁶ Other authors substantiate Steinhoff's claim that Protestants in Alsace-Lorraine – those authors do not distinguish between orthodox and liberal Protestants – did indeed have liberal political sympathies, favour-

104 E.g.: 'La tâche du protestantisme dans la crise religieuse actuelle', *Le Progrès Religieux* 11.52 (25 December 1869), 429-437; 'La Réformation', *Ibid.* VIII.44 (30 October 1875), 347-348; 'La crise du protestantisme', *Ibid.* x.4 (27 January 1877), 26-29; 'Strasbourg, le 30 janvier 1886', *Ibid.* XIX.5 (30 January 1886), 33-34.

105 E.g.: 'La question sociale', *Ibid.* v.10 (9 March 1872), 73-74; 'Socialisme et christianisme', *Ibid.* XIII.11 (13 March 1880), 82-84; 'Le but social du christianisme', *Ibid.* XIV.5 (29 January 1881), 34-35; 'Le salut social', *Ibid.* XVII.32 (9 August 1884), 249-251; 'Le progrès', *Ibid.* XXI.6 (11 February 1888), 41-45; E. Picard, 'Du rôle pratique du pasteur dans les questions sociales', *Ibid.* XXI.8 (23 February 1889), 59-60.

106 Steinhoff, *The Gods of the City*, 372.

ing the regional Liberal Democratic Party.¹⁰⁷ The constituency of this party had a middle-class background.¹⁰⁸ At the same time, socialist candidates, who received a steadily growing number of votes in Alsace-Lorraine from the 1890s onwards, also partially depended on Protestants for support.¹⁰⁹ Undoubtedly, some of these voters were *liberal* Protestants, suggesting that political socialism gradually became more accepted among liberal Protestants in Alsace, just as it did in the Netherlands.

If the readership targeted by *Le Progrès Religieux* serves as an indication of the social composition of the liberal Protestant community in Alsace-Lorraine, then it can safely be concluded that, like similar communities elsewhere, this community had a (higher) middle-class character. As Steinhoff writes, “the *Progrès* addressed a readership that was clearly *kulturprotestantisch*: theologically liberal, educated and bourgeois.”¹¹⁰ Both in Alsace-Lorraine and elsewhere, orthodoxy was eager to stress this fact, implying that, contrary to what its adherents believed, liberal Protestantism would never become mainstream in society or church life. In 1878, for example, an orthodox Lutheran newspaper said that liberal Protestants in Alsace lacked public support. Although the editor-in-chief of *Le Progrès Religieux* responded that he did not doubt the ultimate triumph of liberalism over orthodoxy, maintaining that “even rural congregations are turning more and more away from orthodoxy and are calling for liberal ministers, while liberal publications have been favourably received in most of [those congregations],” it was rather obvious that liberal Protestants in Alsace had difficulty reaching the masses.¹¹¹ This was not only evinced by the number of articles in which the editors of *Le Progrès Religieux* showed themselves struggling with the emergence of socialism and with uplifting the working classes in an effective way. It also became apparent during the annual meetings of the *Union protestante libérale*. Year after year, the com-

107 E.g.: G. Koch and M. Lienhard, *Les protestants d'Alsace, du vécu au visible* (Strasbourg 1985), 46; R. Oberlé, *L'Alsace au temps du Reichsland 1871-1914* (Mulhouse 1990), 34; B.M. Kahn, *My Father Spoke French. Nationalism and Legitimacy in Alsace, 1871-1914* (New York and London 1990), 131.

108 E. Reybell, ‘Le socialisme et la question d’Alsace-Lorraine’, *La Revue Socialiste* XXXIX (1904), 455-494, here 487.

109 C. Baechler, *Le parti catholique alsacien 1890-1939, du Reichsland à la République Jacobine* (Paris 1982), 216; A. Carrol, ‘Socialism and National Identity in Alsace from Reichsland to République, 1890-1921’, *European History Quarterly* XIX.1 (2010), 57-78, here 61. See also: J.M. Mayeur, *Autonomie et politique en Alsace. La constitution de 1911* (Paris 1970), 177; Steinhoff, *The Gods of the City*, 130.

110 *Ibid.*, 365.

111 ‘Strasbourg, le 19 janvier 1878’, *Le Progrès Religieux* XI.3 (19 January 1878), 17-18, here 17.

plaint could be heard that the membership of the *Union* did not increase, that the so-called '*conférences de Saint-Nicolas*', popular lectures on a wide variety of topics that the *Union* organised every winter, were poorly attended, and that *Le Progrès Religieux* failed to attract more subscribers.¹¹² As of 1892, this last problem even caused the *Union* to stop issuing *Le Progrès Religieux* for good; it opted instead for trying to strengthen the position in the Alsatian press of the German-language *Evangelisch-Protestantischer Kirchenbote* (Evangelical Protestant Church Messenger), which it had financially supported since 1872.¹¹³

The disappearance of its own French-language opinion magazine serves to show that the *Union protestante libérale* was beginning to lose a good deal of its significance in Alsatian church life. Combatting orthodoxy became less necessary, as the German authorities did not manage to completely get rid of liberals at the administrative level of the Lutheran Church.¹¹⁴ Steinhoff suggests that theological developments within Alsatian liberal Protestantism itself, motivated by dissatisfaction with nineteenth-century modern theology that seemed to resemble Dutch malcontents' and right-wing modernists' discontents, also weakened liberal opposition against orthodoxy.¹¹⁵ Combatting orthodoxy even lost its urgency after the French re-annexation of Alsace-Lorraine in 1919. To secure Alsations' loyalty, the French government continued to treat the churches in Alsace-Lorraine in the same way as it had done before 1871, meaning that it did not enforce the separation of church and state. In France, this separation had led to an ultimate institutional split between Reformed orthodoxy on the one hand and Reformed liberals and moderates on the other hand. In Alsace-Lorraine, however, liberal and orthodox Lutherans had to find a *modus vivendi* to lay claim to state support, as the French government only recognised one undivided Lutheran Church. In 1924, both groups more or less decided to bury the hatchet: ministers and members had to ac-

112 E.g.: R. Reuss, 'Les conférences libérales', *Le Progrès Religieux* xv.1 (7 January 1882), 2-5, here 2; 'La quinzième assemblée générale de l'Union protestante-libérale d'Alsace-Lorraine', *Ibid.* xix.50 (11 December 1886), 393-398; 'La dix-huitième assemblée générale de l'Union protestante-libérale d'Alsace-Lorraine', *Ibid.* xxiii.50 (13 December 1890), 393-394; 'La dix-neuvième assemblée de l'Union protestante-libérale', *Ibid.* xxiv.50 (12 December 1891), 393-394.

113 Steinhoff, *The Gods of the City*, 360.

114 *Ibid.*, 190-196.

115 *Ibid.*, 196. As Faber argues, the rise of malcontentism and right-wing modernism in the Netherlands had its equivalents abroad, in any case in Switzerland, France, and the United Kingdom. See: Faber, *Rechts en links in het vrijzinnig Christendom*, 6-7.

cept the Augsburg confession as the official doctrinal basis of the Lutheran Church, but they did not have to endorse it to the letter.¹¹⁶ This now formalised situation in the Alsatian Lutheran Church was thus, in practice, more or less the same as the situation that existed in the Dutch Reformed Church.

6 Hungary

In the emergence of a liberal theological current in Hungary, which at the time also included Transylvania in present-day Romania, Dutch modern theology functioned as a supporter.¹¹⁷ Two of the first and most important ethnically Hungarian champions of liberal Protestantism, both of Transylvanian origin, studied in the Netherlands in the 1860s. Between 1863 and 1865, Albert Kovács (1838-1904) was a student in Utrecht, where C.W. Opzoomer lectured. As of late 1866, his brother Ödön Kovács (1844-1895) followed his example. Ödön Kovács later acknowledged that listening to Opzoomer, who also introduced him to J.H. Scholten's theological publications, "emotionally and intellectually satisfied me for the first time, giving a particular and firm foundation to my studies." In 1868, Ödön transferred to Leiden, to have the opportunity to hear Scholten, who would be his "example and guide" throughout his entire scholarly career, in person. He left Leiden in 1869, obtaining a doctorate, under A. Kuenen's supervision, with a thesis on contemporary Protestantism in Hungary.¹¹⁸ Back in their native country, Albert and Ödön both lectured as professors in theology, making their Hungarian students acquainted with Dutch modern theology. Ödön kept in touch with his *Doktorvater* Kuenen, occasionally writing letters on developments in Hungarian church life. In one of these letters, he informed Kuenen about the founding of an association modelled

116 J.P. Willaime, *Profession: pasteur. Sociologie de la condition du clerc à la fin du xx^e siècle* (Geneva 1986), 75; C. Storne-Sengel, *Les protestants d'Alsace-Lorraine de 1919 à 1939. Entre les deux règnes* (Strasbourg 2003), 87-89, 159. See also: Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III, 151.

117 E. Révész, J.S. Kovács and L. Ravasz, *Hungarian Protestantism. Its Past, Present and Future* (Budapest 1927), 42; Á.E. Sípós, "Bittet den Herrn der Ernte." Gyula Forgács (1879-1941): *Pionier der ungarischen reformierten Innere Mission* (Utrecht 2007), 99, 102. Hungarian Protestantism was not only influenced by Dutch modernism, but also by Dutch orthodoxy, especially neo-Calvinism. See: *Ibid.*, 104; B. Gaál, "Calvin's Truth" and "Hungarian Religion." Remembering a Reformer', in: J. de Niet, H.J. Paul and B.T. Wallet (eds.), *Sober, Strict and Scriptural. Collective Memories of John Calvin* (Leiden 2009), 97-124, here 119.

118 F. Postma and T. Marjovszky, *Kovács Ödön hat ismeretlen levele Abraham Kuenen leideni professzorhoz / Zes onbekende brieven van Ödön Kovács aan Prof. Abraham Kuenen te Leiden* (Budapest 1997), 11-12.

after the German *Protestantenverein*.¹¹⁹ Albert had initiated this with an 1870 pamphlet, in which he explained that, next to the threat orthodoxy constituted to the spread of liberal views in church life, there were two additional threats forcing liberal-minded Protestants in Hungary to organise themselves. These two threats were posed by “those who want to have faith without knowledge, and [those who want to have] knowledge without faith.”¹²⁰ With the former phrase, Albert Kovács referred to Roman Catholic priests, who were obliged to instruct their parishioners, a majority of the Hungarian people, in the ‘obscurantist’ teachings promulgated at the First Vatican Council of 1868–1870. With the latter, he referred to German freethinkers and their supporters who, by making tours round the Hungarian countryside and making available a Hungarian translation of Ludwig Büchner’s 1864 book *Kraft und Stoff* (*Force and Matter*), tried to popularise a materialistic worldview.¹²¹ With the aid of one his colleagues on the theological faculty of the Hungarian Reformed Church in Pest, Mór Ballagi (1815–1891), Albert Kovács acted on his proposal and established the *Magyarországi Protestáns Egylet* (Hungarian Protestant Society) in October 1871. The new association not only received expressions of sympathy from the Kovács brothers’ fellow liberal members of the Hungarian Reformed Church; representatives of the Lutheran and Unitarian communities in Hungary also attended its inaugural meeting.¹²²

The *Protestáns Egylet* aspired to “a renewal of religious and moral life in the spirit of Jesus and in accordance with the whole of cultural advancement.”¹²³ It did so by advocating an anti-supernaturalist interpretation of the Gospel, absolute doctrinal freedom, and initiatives to intellectually, ethically, and religiously uplift the Hungarian people.¹²⁴ This last endeavour inaugurating ‘home missions’ in Hungary led the *Protestáns Egylet* to establish numerous public and school libraries and to engage in orphan care. By preaching

119 Postma and Marjovszky, *Kovács Ödön*, 34.

120 A. Kovács, *The History of the Free Church of Scotland's Mission to the Jews and its Impact on the Reformed Church in Hungary* (Frankfurt am Main etc. 2006), 179.

121 A. Kovács, *Alakítsunk egyházi reformegyletet* (Pest [1870] 2012); M. Bucsay, *Der Protestantismus in Ungarn, 1521–1978. Ungarns Reformationskirchen in Geschichte und Gegenwart* 11 (Vienna etc. 1979), 110.

122 C.A. Schwarz, *Der ungarische Protestanten-Verein. Seine Entstehung und seine Wirksamkeit* (Budapest 1873), 22–39; Bucsay, *Der Protestantismus in Ungarn* 11, 110; G.A. Kish, *The Origins of the Baptist Movement Among the Hungarians. A History of the Baptists in the Kingdom of Hungary from 1846 to 1893* (Leiden 2012), 211; J. Zoványi and S. Ladányi, *Magyarországi protestáns egyháztörténeti lexikon* (Budapest 1977), 383.

123 A.M. Kool, *God Moves in a Mysterious Way. The Hungarian Protestant Foreign Mission Movement, 1756–1951* (Zoetermeer 1993), 48–49.

124 F. Schuler von Libloy, *Protestantisches Kirchenrecht, vornehmlich das der Evangelischen Ausburger Bekenntnisse in Siebenbürgen* (Hermannstadt 1871), 141–142.

a Christianity consistent with contemporary scientific and scholarly thinking, and attempting to show that social reform had to be based on such a modernised Christianity in order to be successful, the leaders of the association tried to prevent the lower classes and particularly the cultured class from becoming estranged from religious life.¹²⁵ Their aim to reform church life and society on the basis of liberal Protestant principles was not only intended to preserve the relevance of Christianity in the age to come – it also had a nationalistic intent. The *Protestáns Egylet* therefore more closely resembled the ‘mother’ of all modernist associations in Europe, the *Protestantenverein*, than the NPB.¹²⁶ Four years before the founding of the *Protestáns Egylet*, Hungary had been given a status equal to Austria within the Habsburg-Danubian Monarchy. Although dissatisfaction with the political and cultural dominance of the Austrian Germans within the monarchy, fuelled by a general trend among European ethnic groups to stress their unique cultural features, had not been limited to Hungarians, the latter were the only ethnic minority subjected to Habsburg rule to receive more autonomy. In what now came to be called ‘Transleithania’, consisting of present-day Hungary, Romanian Transylvania, Serbian Vojvodina, Slovakia, and Croatia, the now semi-independent Hungarian government aspired to a ‘Magyarisation’ of social and cultural life: it promoted the use of the Hungarian language at the expense of German and minority languages, as well as the advancement of a single Hungarian identity in multi-ethnic Transleithania.¹²⁷ Liberal-minded Hungarian Protestants considered their interpretation of Christianity to be a defining characteristic of this Hungarian identity, juxtaposing their image of progressive Protestant Hungary with that of conservative Roman Catholic Austria. They believed that their interpretation of Christianity was broad enough to be acceptable to Reformed Hungarians, Unitarian Transylvanians, Catholic Hungarians, Slovaks and Croats, and the Serbian Orthodox population of Vojvodina. In their view, a Magyarisation of Transleithania hence could only succeed if it had a liberal Protestant basis.¹²⁸ The *Protestáns Egylet* was intended to contribute to this process.¹²⁹

125 Bucsay, *Der Protestantismus in Ungarn* II, 110–112; Kish, *The Origins of the Baptist Movement Among the Hungarians*, 210.

126 F. Valjavec (K.A. Fischer and M. Bernath eds.), *Ausgewählte Aufsätze* (Munich 1963), 391; Révész, Kováts and Ravasz, *Hungarian Protestantism*, 42; K. Fitschen, *Protestantische Minderheitskirchen in Europa im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Leipzig 2008), 125.

127 J.W. Mason, *The Dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, 1867–1918* (London and New York [1985] 2013), 17–18.

128 Cf.: Kish, *The Origins of the Baptist Movement Among the Hungarians*, 209, note 89.

129 Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* 111, 182; Kovács, *The History of the Free Church of Scotland's Mission to the Jews*, 181; Kish, *The Origins of the Baptist Movement Among the Hungarians*, 209–210.

Just as in the Netherlands, liberal Protestants in Hungary did not agree with each other as to *how* church life and society should be reformed. However, contrary to their Dutch counterparts, they found this to be an insurmountable problem, as a result of which "the best of its [the *Protestáns Egylet*'s, ТК] strength very founders and leaders was wasted in passionate and futile controversies, not even always concerning problems of theology and faith, but much more frequently matters of church and school politics."¹³⁰ The *Protestáns Egylet* failed to attract much support in liberal circles: at its height, it consisted of only seventeen local branches and less than one thousand members.¹³¹ Furthermore, the ecclesial policy of the secular authorities thwarted the development of a liberal current in Hungarian church life.¹³² Inner discord, combined with a lack of sympathisers and government obstructions, caused the Hungarian League of Protestants to practically become defunct in 1875, barely four years after its founding. However, its short life in Hungarian church life did have a lasting effect: it contributed to increasing public interest in religious matters and the increased assertiveness of orthodoxy.¹³³ Regarding the fourth quarter of the nineteenth century, historiography on Protestantism in Hungary suggests that liberals did not play a major role in the Reformed Church in this period. After 1875, a 'liberal' view of religious differences, not necessarily liberal theological views as such, could be found among primarily the ethnically Hungarian members of the Unitarian Church in Transylvania.¹³⁴

7 Sweden

Another association modelled after the *Protestantenverein* was founded in Sweden in 1882. At the time, the Lutheran established churches in Scandinavia, along which only a tiny number of other churches existed, were conservative in both their doctrinal and liturgical characteristics. Though they had always been strongly oriented towards Germany, the cradle of Lutheranism, they were not receptive to the historical-critical studies conducted at German

¹³⁰ Révész, Kováts and Ravasz, *Hungarian Protestantism*, 42.

¹³¹ A theological book series that the leaders of the *Protestáns Egylet* inaugurated continued to be issued until 1889. See: Bucsay, *Der Protestantismus in Ungarn* 11, 112–113.

¹³² Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* 111, 182.

¹³³ Révész, Kováts and Ravasz, *Hungarian Protestantism*, 42; Bucsay, *Der Protestantismus in Ungarn* 11, 112; Kish, *The Origins of the Baptist Movement Among the Hungarians*, 216.

¹³⁴ E.M. Wilbur, *A History of Unitarianism. In Transylvania, England, and America* (Boston [1945] 1978), 156–157, 162–165; C.M. Geels, *Tochtgenoten in vrijzinnigheid. Korte studie inzake theologische ontwikkelingen bij de Unitarische Kerk van Transsylvanië* (Utrecht 2003), 11–16.

theological faculties.¹³⁵ Just as in Britain, the government in Sweden looked on liberal Protestantism, with its pursuit of ecclesial and social reform, as a potential threat to the civil order. The few non-established churches in Sweden were as yet too small and too insignificant to develop into supporters of such reform, as did the Unitarians in Great Britain.¹³⁶ Attempts to shape a liberal Protestant community were nonetheless made. As early as 1871, the later Nobel Peace Prize winner K.P. Arnoldson (1844-1916) founded the organisation *Sanningssökarna* (Truth Seekers) in Gothenburg to study, and promote, American Unitarianism. Soon thereafter, a second Truth Seekers association came into being in Stockholm.¹³⁷ Six years later, Arnoldson and his ally A.F. Åkerberg (1833-1901) began to issue the monthly periodical *Sanningssökaren* (*The Truth Seeker*), which was, as stated in its subtitle, devoted to 'a belief in human Reason and practical Christianity', and contained a mix of articles on modern theology and social issues.

The *Sanningssökarna* associations in Gothenburg and Stockholm did not inspire liberal-minded Protestants elsewhere in Sweden to found similar associations, and even seem to have quickly ceased to exist. In an 1880 article in *Sanningssökaren*, the layman N. Månsson therefore called for a new attempt to bring a liberal current into being in Swedish Protestantism.¹³⁸ While Månsson felt that leaving the established Lutheran Church was the best way to do this, Arnoldson wrote in an editorial in *Sanningssökaren* that he disagreed, fearing that liberal religious views would otherwise only circulate among a small sectarian group and would never permeate Swedish church life in its entirety. For his part, Arnoldson drafted a document containing the rules and regulations of an association-to-be that would unite all religiously liberal-minded Swedes, both those with and without church membership. In late 1880, religious liberals in Jönköping and Gothenburg founded two separate associations based on Arnoldson's draft.¹³⁹ In January 1882, the Unitarian-minded nobleman V. Pfeiff

135 K. Scott Latourette, *Christianity in a Revolutionary Age: A History of Christianity in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* 11. *The Nineteenth Century in Europe: The Protestant and Eastern Churches* (London 1959), 131, 179.

136 Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* 111, 177.

137 E. Rodhe, *Den religiösa liberalismen. Nils Ignell, Viktor Rydberg, Pontus Wikner* (Stockholm 1935), 404-405; B.R. Ståhl and B. Persson, *Kulter, Sekter, Samfund. En studie av religiösa minoriteter i Sverige* (Stockholm 1971), 210.

138 H.U. Meyboom, 'Buitenland – Moderne theologie in Zweden', *De Hervorming* 1882-36 (9 September 1882), 143-144, here 144; 1882-37 (16 September 1882), 147-148, here 147.

139 H.U. Meyboom, 'Buitenland – Moderne theologie in Zweden', *Ibid.* 1882-50 (16 December 1882), 199; J. Janson, *Debatten om civiläktenskapets införande i Sverige* (Stockholm 1964), 135, note 78. The association in Gothenburg took the name of the local *Sanningssökarna* association that had been founded in 1871 and did apparently exist at that time no longer.

(1829-1901), who had recently replaced Arnoldson and Åkerberg as the general editor of *Sanningssökaren*, took the initiative to unite these associations in Jönköping and Gothenburg and to found new ones all across Sweden under the banner of a national organisation of religious liberals. He convened a meeting in Stockholm during which he explained what the aims of this national organisation should be: it should bring into being the religious community of the future by propagating an anti-supernaturalist notion of God, fostering a strong sense of humanity, and helping the Swedes to develop a higher moral sense. A minority of those present at the meeting objected to the reference to God in the proposed objectives of the organisation-to-be, and decided to keep aloof. At a second meeting convened a month later, others, led by the philosopher C.F.B. von Bergen (1838-1897), felt that the organisation-to-be should make explicit mention of Christianity in its bylaws and should devote itself to propagating the results of modern, historical-critical Biblical studies. Pfeiff strongly opposed such a focus on the Bible as the only foundation of religious life, thereby inducing Von Bergen and his sympathisers to go their own way. In May 1882, Von Bergen established the *Svenska Protestantföreningen* (Swedish Protestant Association). By choosing this name, he hoped that the *Protestantenverein* and its sister associations outside of Germany would support him instead of Pfeiff.¹⁴⁰ The latter, in turn, founded the *Missionen för förnuftstro* (Missionary Society for the Advancement of a Rational Faith) in July 1882. From then on, there were two organisations in Sweden, one having a slightly broader basis than the other, that basically aspired to the same goal: to liberate the Swedish people from orthodox conceptions of God in order to enable them to freely develop their religious lives.¹⁴¹

The organisational split within the tiny group of religious liberals – both the *Svenska Protestantföreningen* and the *Missionen för förnuftstro* had only a handful of members – hindered both from actually taking concrete steps to advance religious liberalism in Sweden. Moreover, while Pfeiff and Von Bergen were both previously oriented towards American Unitarianism, the former developed an interest in Theosophy and the latter even began to set himself

140 E.N. Tigerstedt, *Det religiösa problemet i modern finlands-svensk litteratur* (Helsingfors 1939), 65.

141 'Buitenland – Een Protestantenverein in Zweden', *De Hervorming* 1882-20 (20 May 1882), 79; H.U. Meyboom, 'Buitenland – Moderne theologie in Zweden', *Ibid.* 1882-50 (16 December 1882), 199; 1882-51 (23 December 1882), 203-204; 'Bergen, Carl Fredrik Berndt von', in: *Folkets Bok. Ordbok för nyttig kunskap* x-xi (Stockholm 1883), 631-680, here 671-680; 'Uit Zweden', *De Protestant* 11.30 (26 July 1884), 2; Rodhe, *Den religiösa liberalismen*, 429-432; U. Wittrock, *Ellen Keys väg från kristendom till livstro* (Uppsala 1953), 276.

up as a propagandist for Theosophical and Spiritist ideas in the course of the 1880s. Spiritually, they moved further and further away from liberal Protestantism.¹⁴² Von Bergen, echoing what leading Dutch intellectuals also stated, had come to realise that liberal Protestantism was merely a half-hearted attempt to harmonise Christian conceptions of the divine with contemporary science and scholarly thinking. Those conceptions only made sense in a pre-modern worldview, which science had definitively refuted. Instead of maintaining the conceptual frame of Christianity and trying to attribute new, rational meanings to this, science and religion should be brought to an entirely new synthesis. Von Bergen believed that Theosophy did just this.¹⁴³ Since the founders of the *Svenska Protestantföreningen* and the *Missionen för förnuftstro* were now oriented towards occult spirituality, the advancement of a Swedish 'modernist movement' in the late nineteenth century was nipped in the bud.¹⁴⁴

8 Estonia

The *Protestantliku Ühingu* (Protestant Society) that came into being in Estonia in 1925 was a final association modelled after the *Protestantenverein*.¹⁴⁵ Its leading men, the Tallinn minister Theodor Tallmeister (1889-1947) and the Iisaku minister Voldemar Kuljus (1898-1979), were the first to publicly demand the right to preach modern theological views in the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church. Tallmeister and Kuljus, the former of whom had already established

142 Rodhe, *Den religiösa liberalismen*, 439-441; G. Weidel, *Helgon och gengångare. Gestaltningen av kärlek och rättvisa i Selma Lagerlöfs diktning* (Lund 1964), 195; E. Szalczer, 'The Modes of the Spirit. Poetic Application of Theosophical Ideas in the Works of August Strindberg', in: B.I. Brown (ed.), *Nordic Experiences. Exploration of Scandinavian Cultures* (Westport and London 1997), 39-46, here 39. Swedish liberal Protestantism as a whole was strongly influenced by American Unitarianism. See: W.R. Hutchison, 'The Hinge of History. Fredrika Bremer's American Reports and the Course of Swedish Liberalism', *Swedish Missiological Themes* XCIII.2 (2005), 227-244.

143 Noted in: E. Szalczer, 'Strindberg och Georg Ljungström. En teosofisk bekantskap', *Strindbergiana* XIII (1998), 37-48.

144 'Buitenland – Uit Zweden', *De Hervorming* 1889-39 (28 September 1889), 155. The exact year in which the *Protestantföreningen* ceased to exist is unknown. The *Missionen för förnuftstro* merged together with the (second) *Sanningssökarna* association in Gothenburg into the *Förnuftstroendes Samfund* (Society for Rational Believers) in 1884. See: Rodhe, *Den religiösa liberalismen*, 434.

145 A. Pärsimägi, 'Romaanist "Kutsutud ja seatud" ja tema saamisloost', in: M. Metsanurk (A. Pärsimägi ed.), *Validud teosed / Soosaare. Kutsutud ja seatud* (Tallinn 1969), 591-597, here 593.

the opinion magazine *Protestantline Ilm* (*The Protestant World*) in 1923 as a means to spread such views, perceived a growing religious indifference among the Estonian people and felt that the Lutheran Church needed to reform itself doctrinally and institutionally in order to turn the tide. The founding of the *Protestantliku Ühingu* was intended to enable liberal-minded Lutherans join forces and particularly to bridge the gap between church life and intellectual life.¹⁴⁶ A year after its creation, the *Protestantliku Ühingu* consisted of approximately twenty branches. With the exception of the branch in the university town of Tartu, which often invited professors to give lectures and managed to gain a foothold in the local student population, these branches seem to have existed only on paper. Their sphere of activity was confined to the few congregations with liberal-minded members.¹⁴⁷ The ecclesial authorities nonetheless regarded them as disruptive elements within the Estonian Lutheran community and prohibited ministers who showed sympathy with the *Protestantliku Ühingu* from ascending the pulpit. Kuljus was therefore suspended in 1925 and, because he continued to lead religious services after his suspension, was expelled from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in 1926. For its loyalty to Kuljus, the entire congregation in the Northeast Estonian town of Iisaku met with the same fate in 1931. Tallmeister managed to avoid an impeachment procedure, but he could not prevent his congregation in Tallinn from being deprived of its right to share in decision-making at the national church level that same year.¹⁴⁸

Also in 1931, the *Protestantliku Ühingu* was accepted as a member in the International Association for Liberal Christianity and Religious Freedom, to which the first section of this chapter has already referred and about which more is said below.¹⁴⁹ However, it soon lost a good deal of its significance. Already in 1931, negotiations were started between Tallmeister and Kuljus on the one hand and representatives of the moderately orthodox and conservatively orthodox wings of the Estonian Lutheran Church on the other. A compromise was reached in 1934. The liberals were now willing to accept the doctrinal basis of the church, since new state regulations threatened to deprive them of their church buildings. In turn, the newly appointed head bishop

146 *Ibid.*; J. Aunver, 'Some Characteristic Spiritual Aspects of the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church', in: J. Aunver and A. Vööbus (eds.), *Charisteria Iohanni Köpp. Octogenario oblato* (Stockholm 1954), 241–261, here 257.

147 P. Rothmets, *Teoloogilised soovud Eesti Evangeeliumi Luteri Usu Kirikus aastatel 1917–1934* (Tartu 2012), 482.

148 *Ibid.*, 483; M. Ketola, *The Nationality Question in the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church, 1918–1939* (Helsinki 2000), 277.

149 'The St. Gall Meeting', *The Christian Leader* xxxv (17 September 1932), 1058.

in the Estonian Lutheran Church, the moderately orthodox H.B. Rahamägi (1886-1941), was willing to tolerate modern theological views for the sake of ecclesial unity. He wanted to prevent factional quarrels from intensifying, fearing that otherwise the position of the church in its relation to the government would become weaker. Kuljus and the Iisaku congregation were welcomed back into the church, while all charges against Tallmeister were dropped and his congregation in Tallinn was once again treated similarly to all other congregations.¹⁵⁰ Though it was no longer needed as an inner-church pressure group, the *Protestantliku Ühingu* did not immediately disappear. It presumably continued to exist until 1940 – the same year in which the Soviet occupation of Estonia ended the publication of *Protestantline Ilm*, called '*Protestantlik Maailm*' (which also translates as '*The Protestant World*') since Kuljus became its editor in 1935.¹⁵¹ The *Protestantliku Ühingu* was unsuccessful in realising its ambition to win back intellectuals to church life, but it did manage to increase their interest in religious issues as such.¹⁵²

9 Unitarians in the United Kingdom and the United States

While modern theological principles were also present in non-Unitarian church communities in the United Kingdom and the United States, the Unitarians centred around the British and Foreign Unitarian Association (BFUA) and the American Unitarian Association (AUA) were the only Protestants in the Anglo-Saxon world who established relations with the NPB and the other associations modelled after the *Protestantenverein* in the countries reviewed above. Both founded on 26 May 1825, these Unitarian associations coordinated activities on behalf of Unitarian congregations in Britain and the United States, which were formally entirely autonomous and hence not subject to the synodal authority of a larger ecclesial body. Membership of the BFUA and the AUA was accordingly reserved to individuals, but as of 1884 an amendment to its articles of association turned the AUA into an association that could only be joined by congregations, and as such turned it into the *de facto* national Unitarian denomination in America.¹⁵³

150 Rothmets, *Teoloogilised voolud Eesti Evangeeliumi Luteri*, 483-484; Pärsimägi, 'Romaanist "Kutsutud ja seatud" ja tema saamisloost', 594.

151 *Ibid.*; T. Päädem, 'Estonia', in: H.J. Hillerbrand (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Protestantism* 11 (New York and London 2004), 684-687, here 686.

152 Aunver, 'Some Characteristic Spiritual Aspects', 257.

153 A. Greenwood and M.W. Harris, *An Introduction to the Unitarian and Universalist Traditions* (Cambridge 2011), 140-141.

Although the idea that Jesus of Nazareth was not God incarnated was basically as old as Christianity itself, a specific current within theology and a specific group of congregations named 'Unitarian' only came into being soon after the Reformation, for the first time in Poland and Transylvania. Early Unitarians maintained the unity of God, stressed that salvation was not reserved for a small predestined circle of elect, and believed, in accordance with their emphasis on man's free will, that humans are capable of good and evil rather than innately wicked. They still adhered to the principle of *sola Scriptura*, regarding the Bible as the only source through which God can be known.¹⁵⁴ These ideas, as developed particularly in the works of the theologian Faustus Socinus, entered England via the Netherlands, where a significant amount of persecuted Polish Unitarians had gone into exile. In England, freedom of worship was not granted to those denying the Trinity until 1813, hindering Unitarianism from gaining a firm foothold there. However, already in the course of the eighteenth century, the Enlightenment and its rationalist approach to reality had fostered a climate favourable to Unitarian ideas in so-called non-conformist circles – groups of Protestants who did not adhere to the creeds of the established Church of England. In spite of the prohibition against it, some theologians, the most prominent of whom was the non-conformist minister Joseph Priestley (1733–1804), avowed their Unitarian views. In London in 1774, Priestley helped the Anglican minister Theophilus Lindsey (1723–1808) to found the first English congregation with the name of 'Unitarian' and thus the first English congregation in which an anti-Trinitarian interpretation of Christianity was openly preached. Soon afterwards, other Unitarian congregations emerged elsewhere in England.¹⁵⁵

In the United States, first and foremost among Congregationalists and in reaction to the fire and brimstone preaching of the First Great Awakening that was sweeping New England at the time, rationalist Enlightenment thinking also nourished a receptivity to Unitarian theology in the course of the eighteenth century. An Anglican congregation in Boston was the first in the United States to reconstitute itself as 'Unitarian' in 1785. After migrating from Britain to Pennsylvania in 1794, Joseph Priestley furthered the cause of Unitarianism in America, founding a Unitarian congregation in Philadelphia in 1796. Yet, while Priestley followed Socinus's rejection of the view that Christ had existed as a being prior to the birth of Jesus, most Protestants with Unitarian leanings in New England adhered to the Christology named after the non-Trinitarian

154 For the early history of Unitarianism in Transylvania, see: Wilbur, *A History of Unitarianism. In Transylvania, England, and America*, 16–43.

155 *Ibid.*, 280–315.

priest Arius (250/256-336), in which Christ was said to have already existed as the God-created, incorporeal *Logos* even before the creation of the world. Priestley was therefore not in a position to actually take the lead in the emergence of a Unitarian current in American Protestantism. The Congregationalist minister William Ellery Channing (1780-1842), whose Christological views were Arian, came to head first-generation American Unitarians. Although Channing did not advocate a denominational split, Unitarian-minded ministers and congregations, already numbering more than one hundred in the early 1820s, occupied such a controversial position in Congregationalist circles that a schism was inevitable, resulting in the founding of the AUA.¹⁵⁶ Channing and his fellow Unitarian contemporaries had religious beliefs that were Christocentric – they saw Jesus as the person in whom the divine Christ, the *Logos*, became flesh, albeit *not* as one in being with God – and that have been compared to those of the *Groningen* theologians dealt with in chapter 1.¹⁵⁷ In the second half of the nineteenth century, those ideas identified as ‘modernist’ in chapter 1 became dominant in the Unitarian community.¹⁵⁸

The influence of British Unitarianism on the Dutch modernist movement made itself particularly felt in the field of welfare work. Although Unitarians were not the only British Protestants engaged in what has been referred to as *toynbeewerk* in chapter 6, it was in large part through their contacts with British Unitarians that Dutch modernists became acquainted with this kind of social assistance. Liberal Protestants who urged the NPB to address itself to welfare work held up Unitarians in the United Kingdom as an example. One of the most notable among the former, E.C. Knappert, concerned herself with several social initiatives for which she asked NPB members’ full support, by accentuating the strong involvement of the numerically small Unitarian community in similar initiatives in Britain. For example, Knappert praised Unitarians for establishing community centres in working-class areas, and urged NPB branches to do the same.¹⁵⁹ She managed to persuade the branch in her then hometown of Leiden to found a centre for *toynbeewerk*, named ‘*Geloof*,

156 Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology* 11, 1-43.

157 Vanderlaan, *Protestant Modernism in Holland*, 120; Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* 11, 167; Cossee, *Verwantschap en verwijdering*, 10-16.

158 J.H. Allen, ‘The Contact of American Unitarianism and German Thought’, in: *Unitarianism, Its Origin and History. A Course of Sixteen Lectures Delivered in Channing Hall, Boston, 1888-89* (Boston 1890), 97-115.

159 E.C. Knappert, ‘Wat onze geestverwanten in Amerika en in Engeland uitrichten onder de laagste volksklassen’, *De Hervorming* 1896-26 (27 June 1896), 101-102; 1896-27 (4 July 1896), 105-106; 1896-28 (11 July 1896), 110-111.

Hoop, Liefde ('Faith, Hope, Love'), in the vicinity of the local cotton mill, in 1894.¹⁶⁰ Knappert, and those who shared her ideal of integrating welfare work within the framework of the national NPB, felt particularly inspired by two social reformers with strong connections to British Unitarianism: Octavia Hill (1838-1912), whose aim to make the living conditions of the working classes healthier was referred to in the discussion on district nursing, and Mary Augusta Ward (1851-1912), whose 1888 novel *Robert Elsmere* portrayed a Unitarian-minded minister with a social reform agenda.¹⁶¹ The latter, better known by her pen name 'Mrs. Humphry Ward', was an advocate of a particular kind of *toynbeewerk* which H. Oort also supported: university extension, a form of adult education in which university professors shared their knowledge with people from the lower classes.¹⁶²

British Unitarians not only served as an example to Dutch modernists regarding *toynbeewerk*, which, as chapter 6 has explained, was supposed to put free piety into practice with no ulterior motive of trying to 'convert' people to liberal Protestantism. Dutch modernists also copied British Unitarians in an initiative that did have the intention of making propaganda for liberal Protestantism. In order to spread liberal Protestant principles, conceptions of God, and ideas on a wide variety of topics, especially among the lower classes, British Unitarians put advertisements in newspapers in which they offered to lend books to anyone interested. This 'postal mission' or 'post-office mission', led by Florence Hill (1843-1935), Octavia Hill's sister, was thus a library service by mail, the crucial aspect of which was the correspondence between those responding to the ads and the Unitarian 'postal missionaries'. This correspondence was intended to give the latter information about the respondent's class background, level of education, and spiritual needs, in accordance with which they would

160 H. van Veen, 'Knappert, Emilie Charlotte', in: P.J. Meertens et al. (eds.), *Biografisch woordenboek van het socialisme en de arbeidersbeweging in Nederland* III (Amsterdam 1988), 95-98, here 97.

161 E.g.: J.H. Maronier, 'Robert Elsmere', *De Hervorming* 1888-29 (21 July 1888), 114-115; B.B., 'Het "volkspaleis" in het East-End van Londen', *Ibid.* 1890-30 (26 July 1890), 118; 'Buitenland – Mevrouw Humphry Ward', *Ibid.* 1894-40 (6 October 1894), 159-160; I.M.J. Hoog, 'Een toekomst... droom?', *Ibid.* 1898-30 (23 July 1898), 119. Octavia Hill was raised in a Unitarian family, but baptised and confirmed in the Church of England. Although she was an Anglican, Mary Augusta Ward held Unitarian beliefs and moved in Unitarian circles. See: G. Darley, *Octavia Hill* (London 1990), 48; W.S. Peterson, *Victorian Heretic. Mrs. Humphry Ward's "Robert Elsmere"* (Leicester 1976), 201; E.G.E. van der Wall, *Het oude en het nieuwe geloof. Discussies rond 1900* (Leiden 1999), 5-14.

162 E.g.: *Handelingen NPB* 1892, 39-47. Oort put university extension to test, without much avail, in the NPB branch in Rotterdam in 1894.

select the 'proper' literature for the person in question.¹⁶³ As in the cases of community centres and district nursing, it was, also in the case of postal mission, E.C. Knappert who incited her fellow Dutch modernists to follow British Unitarians.¹⁶⁴ While she failed to convince NPB branches to found community centres and to get district nursing centrally organised under the banner of the NPB – as analysed in chapter 6, the NPB wanted to stimulate its members to be socially active without organising *toynbeewerk* itself, arguing that *toynbeewerk* could only be the expression of genuine religious life if individuals were not *required* to take responsibility for it –, she did succeed in persuading the general assembly of the NPB to set up a postal mission in 1895.¹⁶⁵ The *postpropaganda*, as it was called in the NPB, was intended to help people spiritually develop themselves and was accordingly seen as a type of social work.¹⁶⁶ Contrary to *toynbeewerk*, however, it was explicitly meant to propagate a liberal Protestant outlook on life and hence could be organised by the NPB without objections.

Knappert also prompted her fellow modernists to consider following the British Unitarian minister John Trevor (1855-1930) in establishing so-called 'labour churches'.¹⁶⁷ In an 1896 article in *De Hervorming*, she explained that the founding of such churches, which intended to blend social democracy and liberal Protestantism into a socialist Christianity, was motivated by five principles. First, although many socialists did not realise this, the labour movement was in fact a religious movement. After all, it tried to liberate labourers from an economic system that hindered them from becoming spiritually developed individuals and as such furthered the fulfilment of the Kingdom of God. Second, the kind of religion finding expression in the labour movement was not the religion of a particular class, but rather the religion *of* humanity *for* humanity. Third, this religion was non-dogmatic, allowing everyone to develop *personal* conceptions of God, and non-sectarian, transcending denominational boundaries. Fourth, labourers could only free themselves from

163 H.G. Chancellor, *Florence Hill and the Postal Mission* (London [1936]). The Unitarian minister R. Travers Herford had already brought the Unitarian post office mission to the attention of Dutch modernists at the 1889 NPB meeting. Mentioned in: [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – De colportage-commissie', *De Hervorming* 1892-49 (3 December 1892), 196-197, here 197.

164 E.C. Knappert, 'Post-propaganda', *Ibid.* 1895-15 (13 April 1895), 58; 1895-17 (27 April 1895), 65-66.

165 [E.C. Knappert in:] *Handelingen NPB 1895*, 10-11; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Ons zilveren feest', *De Hervorming* 1895-45 (9 November 1895), 178-179, here 178.

166 E.g.: J.F. Knipscheer, 'Onze postpropaganda', *Ibid.* 1906-06 (10 February 1906), 41-42.

167 E.C. Knappert, 'De Engelsche Arbeidskerk', *Ibid.* 1896-37 (12 September 1896), 145-146; 1896-38 (19 September 1896), 149-150; 1896-39 (26 September 1896), 154; 1896-40 (3 October 1896), 157-158.

wage slavery if they knew what the laws of God were and if their personalities were developed to such an extent that they were able to obey those laws. Fifth and finally, individual reform should not precede structural reform of the fabric of society, as liberal Protestants maintained, nor should the overthrow of the existing socio-economic order precede moral uplifting, as maintained in socialism – rather, individual and social reform should be promoted *simultaneously*.¹⁶⁸ After establishing a first labour church in Manchester in 1891, Trevor gained a following in other British cities and towns as well, resulting in the emergence of more than fifty labour churches in the mid-1890s. Soon afterwards however, the labour church movement fell into decline, ceasing to exist by the outbreak of the First World War.¹⁶⁹ This decline was not due to hostility against labour churches in politically socialist circles – on the contrary, several leading social democrats sympathised with Trevor. The labour church movement collapsed rather due to a lack of support in liberal Protestant circles. Leading Unitarians such as P.H. Wicksteed (1844-1927) and R. Travers Herford (1860-1950) were sceptical about Trevor's initiative. The former had initially supported Trevor, but came to conclude that the labour churches fell short of expectations.¹⁷⁰ The latter had never seen any good in separate labour churches in the first place, blaming Trevor for reducing the Gospel to a socialist pamphlet.¹⁷¹

In the Netherlands, labour churches failed to emerge, for in the 1890s the antagonism between the labour movement and religious movements such as the modernist one was considerably greater than in Britain – in fact, nineteenth-century socialism in Britain as such was much less permeated with an anti-religious and anti-church spirit than in continental Europe.¹⁷² Even Dutch modernists who were favourably disposed towards Trevor's labour church movement ultimately did not follow in his footsteps. After resigning as the pastor of the NPB branch in Schiedam and joining the SDAP in 1899, F.W.N.

168 E.C. Knappert, 'De Engelsche Arbeidskerk', *De Hervorming* 1896-38 (19 September 1896), 149-150, here 149.

169 M. Bevir, 'The Labour Church Movement', *Journal of British Studies* XXXVIII.2 (1999), 217-245.

170 'Buitenland – Uit de arbeiderskerken', *De Hervorming* 1899-28 (15 July 1899), 118-119.

171 'Buitenland – Engelsche correspondentie', *Ibid.* 1893-51 (23 December 1893), 203; 1893-52 (30 December 1893), 207. See also: Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III, 169-170.

172 P. Catterall, 'The Distinctiveness of British Socialism? Religion and the Rise of Labour, c. 1900-39', in: M. Worley (ed.), *The Foundations of the British Labour Party. Identities, Cultures and Perspectives, 1900-39* (Farnham and Burlington 2009), 131-152, here 134-137; Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III, 170.

Hugenholtz, Jr., for example, thought of establishing a labour church, preferably under the banner of the SDAP.¹⁷³ Troelstra, however, blew the whistle on him, arguing that Hugenholtz, or any SDAP member for that matter, was subject to party discipline and not allowed to undertake an initiative in the name of social democracy without party consent.¹⁷⁴ As it was absolutely clear that there was no party support for a labour church, Hugenholtz abandoned his intention.¹⁷⁵ A. van der Heide, to name another socialist modernist, wrote sympathetically on the institution of the labour church as late as 1914. Yet, in accordance with his ideal of the Dutch Reformed Church as a *volkskerk*, he believed that the Dutch Reformed Church was liberal Protestants' gateway to the masses and felt that it was better to strengthen the socialist element within the denomination than to found separate labour churches.¹⁷⁶ Already at the 1896 general NPB assembly, Knappert herself hesitated about 'importing' the labour church movement from Britain to the Netherlands. In her eyes, the NPB was the obvious candidate to do so, but, notwithstanding her strong sympathies for Trevor, she stated that the NPB would not and should not take the lead in establishing labour churches. At the time, Knappert noted, "many" NPB members were "socialists of the heart" – socialists in a vague cultural sense, who acknowledged that present-day society was not as humane as it should be – , but only "very few" of them were social democrats – that is, socialists in a political sense. She therefore believed that there was not enough support for initiatives furthering the cause of social democracy, such as the labour church, in NPB circles. Moreover, it was not up to the NPB to take such an initiative, Knappert argued: labour churches should not be affiliated to one particular ecclesial denomination or religious association and should only be established if labourers themselves felt the need to do so.¹⁷⁷ In SDAP circles, this last argument was brought forward against the founding of labour churches as such. In response to the only serious attempt to actually institute a labour church, in Utrecht in 1899, the prominent socialist Richard Roland Holst (1868-1938)

173 [F. Netscher], 'Karakterschets – Ds. F.W.N. Hugenholtz Jr.', *Hollandsche Revue* IV:3 (1899), 179-192, here 191; Noordegraaf, 'F.W.N. Hugenholtz als voorganger van de Protestantenvbond in Schiedam', 42.

174 [Netscher], 'Karakterschets – Ds. F.W.N. Hugenholtz Jr.', 192.

175 'Binnenlandsch overzicht – "Labour-church" (arbeiderskerk) te Utrecht', *Sociaal Weekblad* XIII.9 (4 March 1899), 104-105, here 105. See also: [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Geen arbeidskerk', *De Hervorming* 1899-10 (11 March 1899), 38.

176 [A. van der Heide in: H. de Lang], 'Redactioneel – "Odéon"', *Ibid.* 1914-29 (18 July 1914), 247-248, here 248.

177 [E.C. Knappert in:] *Handelingen NPB* 1896, 51-53.

scoffed that the whole endeavour was a bourgeois affair, lacking working-class support and not answering to working-class needs.¹⁷⁸

While British Unitarianism thus influenced discussions in the Dutch modernist movement on social reform, the influence of American Unitarianism on Dutch modernism was more diverse. Channing was held in high regard in modernist circles, though more so in the *Groningen* movement.¹⁷⁹ Modernists admired him for paving the way for the two theologians who, after himself, undoubtedly exerted the most profound influence on the development of American Unitarianism in the nineteenth century: Ralph Waldo Emerson and Theodore Parker (1810–1860).¹⁸⁰ Translating several of Emerson's and Parker's works into Dutch and devoting several biographical studies to them, Dutch modernist theologians showed a keen interest in their outlook on and attitude to life.¹⁸¹ Emerson was the key figure in a movement known as 'Transcendentalism', which, emerging in Unitarian circles in the 1830s, built upon Channing's idea that there is a divine spark inside every human being, while leaving the latter's rationalist, Christocentric supernaturalism behind.¹⁸² In line with the general trend in contemporary American and European intellectual life to no longer one-sidedly focus on human reason as the basis of knowledge, called 'Romanticism', Transcendentalists felt that a rationalist approach to reality neglected man's inner life. They argued that human nature is essentially good, as the human and the divine are essentially one. Contrary to what their name might suggest, Transcendentalists thus believed in the immanence of God, defining spiritual development not as a process through which individuals come to resemble God, but as a process through which individuals become truly one with God. Their name was actually given to them by their opponents, who denigrated their philosophy of life for 'transcending' reason. As God was in all, and as they stressed that modern society affected man's true self, Transcendentalists tended to equate 'becoming one with God' with 'becoming one

178 [R. Roland Holst in: J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Te Utrecht', *De Hervorming* 1899–08 (25 February 1899), 30.

179 J. Vree, 'Swiers, Jacob Jacobs', in: J. van den Berg et al. (eds.), *BLGNP IV* (Kampen 1998), 410–412.

180 E.g.: Rauwenhoff, *Geschiedenis van het protestantisme* III, 422–427.

181 These biographies include: A. Réville, *Het leven en de werken van Theodore Parker. Een hoofdstuk uit de geschiedenis van de afschaffing der slavernij in de Verenigde Staten* (Arnhem 1866); J.H. Maronier, *Theodoor Parker* (Haarlem 1875); M.A.N. Rovers, *Ralph Waldo Emerson* ([Haarlem 1880]); E.C. Knappert, 'Ralph Waldo Emerson en zijn invloed', *Stemmen uit de Vrije Gemeente* XVIII (1895), 59–90.

182 W.E. Channing, "'Likeness to God'" (1828), in: J. Myerson (ed.), *Transcendentalism. A Reader* (Oxford etc. 2000), 3–20.

with unspoiled nature'. Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862) most straightforwardly exemplifies this tendency in his 1854 book *Walden*.¹⁸³ Theodore Parker was also involved in Transcendentalism. Intensively reflecting upon the questions raised by German biblical criticism, he concluded in 1841 that the great truths of Christianity did not depend on the person of Jesus – rather, it is the voice of conscience resonating in man's inner self that confirms the veracity of what Jesus preached. His views were so controversial that his fellow Unitarian ministers no longer accepted him in their midst.¹⁸⁴

While Dutch modernists chiefly appreciated Emerson for the 'free piety' expressed in his works and less for his pantheistic theology, they admired Parker for both his devoutness and his theological views. Lindeboom even goes as far as to say that "no other foreigner has left such a mark on Dutch liberal Protestantism as Parker. [...] In the Netherlands, the writings of no other foreign liberal Protestant have been so widely published and read as those of Parker."¹⁸⁵ No other Dutch modernists, Lindeboom continues, identified with Parker as much as the Hugenholtz brothers. Indeed, particularly P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr. had a mindset similar to Parker's – a later observer even noted with astonishment that he, "more than twenty years after the death of the American clergyman, quotes Parker as many as sixteen times in a 'devotional anthology for our time!'"¹⁸⁶ In an 1888 article in *De Hervorming*, P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr. did not hesitate to put Parker on a par with Jesus, arguing that the spiritual brilliance of both men came to shine even more brightly after their physical presence on earth had ended.¹⁸⁷ As he implied that same year, he tried to model himself, as the pastor of the Free Congregation in Amsterdam, on Parker, whom he praised for uniting theological profundity with practical wisdom.¹⁸⁸ In fact, as Lindeboom concludes, the founding of the Free Congregation as such "can

183 'Introduction', in: J. Myerson, S.H. Petruionis and L.D. Walls (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Transcendentalism* (Oxford etc. 2010), XXXIII-XXXIII; D. Grodzins, 'Unitarianism', in: *Ibid.*, 50-69; A.J. von Frank, 'Religion', in: *Ibid.*, 117-135.

184 Th. Parker, "A Discourse of the Transient and Permanent in Christianity" (1841), in: Myerson (ed.), *Transcendentalism*, 340-365; Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology* 1, 85-90.

185 Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* 11, 181.

186 F.C. de Vries, 'The Influence of Parker on European Thought', *The Proceedings of the Unitarian Historical Society* XLII.1 (1960), 84-86, here 85. De Vries refers to: P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., *Levenslicht. Stichtelijke bloemlezing voor onzen tijd* (Amsterdam 1882).

187 P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., "Een hart van liefde vol", *De Hervorming* 1888-13 (31 March 1888), 49; M.J.H.M. Poorthuis, 'Boeddha als toetssteen voor de religieuze identiteit. Het debat binnen de Vrije Gemeente van 1878-1903', *Documentatieblad voor de Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis na 1800* XXXIII.72 (June 2010), 5-27, here 8.

188 Hugenholtz Jr., *Licht en schaduw*, 76-77.

hardly be conceived of without Parker Memorial Hall in Boston in view."¹⁸⁹ Parker Memorial Hall was built in 1873 as the chapel of the Twenty-Eighth Congregational Society, founded in November 1845 to provide Parker with a pulpit after Unitarian congregations in Boston had denied him access to their pulpits.¹⁹⁰ The Twenty-Eighth Congregational Society, to quote the theologian D.P. McKanan, "emerged as the era's preeminent radical congregation," with 'radical' referring to its strong commitment to progressive causes, such as abolitionism, feminism, socialism, and pacifism.¹⁹¹ Though it would be wrong to depict the Free Congregation as a hotbed of radical activism, it did resemble the Twenty-Eighth Congregational Society in the sense that it provided a platform for those who defended the above causes: it was the first congregation in the Netherlands to welcome a woman into its pulpit and regularly organised debates on subjects such as socialism and refusal of military service. In the modernist movement as a whole, Hugenholtz was one of the most ardent advocates of joint social activities. Moreover, during his time as its pastor, the Free Congregation stood, theologically speaking, at the extreme left of the modernist spectrum: having a pantheistic outlook on life, Hugenholtz quoted contemporary literature and non-Christian scriptures just as often as the Bible in his sermons.¹⁹²

Just like their British co-religionists, American Unitarians distinguished themselves by their efforts to develop a 'practical Christianity'. As the historian C.H. Hopkins notes, their liberal theology with its optimistic ethics of moral perfectibility was the "seedbed" for a social reform movement that emerged as of the late 1860s and thrived from the 1890s onwards, the so-called 'Social Gospel'.¹⁹³ While some scholars tend to stretch the term 'Social Gospel' to such an extent that it includes basically every Christian champion of so-

189 Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* 11, 181. Next to Parker Memorial Hall, the so-called '*freireligiöse Gemeinden*' ('free religious congregations') in Germany also inspired the Hugenholtz brothers to found the Free Congregation. See: P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., 'De vrije gemeenten in Duitsland', *Stemmen uit de Vrije Gemeente* 1 (1878), 191-211; P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., *Vrije Gemeenten* (Baarn 1908), 3-21.

190 W.M. Whitehill, *Boston. A Topographical History* (Cambridge 1959), 132; D. Grodzins, 'Theodore Parker and the 28th Congregational Society. The Reform Church and the Spirituality of Reformers in Boston, 1845-1859', in: Ch. Capper and C.E. Wright (eds.), *Transient and Permanent. The Transcendentalist Movement and Its Contexts* (Boston 1999), 73-117.

191 D.P. McKanan, *Prophetic Encounters. Religion and the American Radical Tradition* (Boston 2011), 2, 64.

192 Poorthuis, 'Boeddha als toetssteen voor de religieuze identiteit', 9-11, 14, 24-27.

193 C.H. Hopkins, *The Rise of the Social Gospel in American Protestantism 1865-1915* (New Haven and London 1940), 4.

cial reform,¹⁹⁴ Hutchison reserves the term for those Christians who held the view “that social salvation precedes individual salvation both temporally and in importance. [...] It was this theoretical elevation of social salvation [...] that made the Social Gospel a distinctive movement.”¹⁹⁵ Yet, this definition is open to question, since even some of the most prominent figures identifying with the Social Gospel did not endorse this viewpoint.¹⁹⁶ Instead of taking the view that structural changes in the fabric of modern society should necessarily precede moral self-improvement at the individual level as its defining characteristic, which wrongly suggests that all of its champions inclined towards political socialism, the Social Gospel can best be typified more generally by its advocates’ perception

to be acting on a divine mandate as they marshaled public opinion, the tools of social science, and the power of the democratic political process in efforts to reconstruct society and its institutions, from the local to the global level, according to Christian ethical principles. This feature distinguished the social gospel from other expressions of social Christianity, which advocated and performed benevolent social ministries, but for the primary or exclusive purpose of salvation of individual souls. In fact, theological conservatives would disparage the social gospel for its entanglement with secular social science and politics and efforts to reconstruct what they viewed as a hopelessly profane world.¹⁹⁷

By setting theological conservatives in opposition to the Social Gospel, the last sentence of the above quote suggests that the latter was closely linked to theological liberalism. Indeed, although not every liberal Protestant sympathised with the Social Gospel, and although orthodox Protestants were not completely absent in the Social Gospel movement, liberal Protestantism and

194 P.T. Philips, *A Kingdom on Earth. Anglo-American Social Christianity, 1880-1940* (University Park 1996), xix.

195 W.R. Hutchison, *The Modernist Impulse in American Protestantism* (Durham and London [1976] 1992), 165, note 36.

196 J. Forsythe Fishburn, *The Fatherhood of God and the Victorian Family. The Social Gospel in America* (Philadelphia 1981), 182, note 1; J. Forsythe Fishburn, ‘The Social Gospel as Missionary Ideology’, in: W.R. Shenk (ed.), *North American Foreign Missions, 1810-1914. Theology, Theory, and Policy* (Grand Rapids and Cambridge 2004), 218-242, here 220-221.

197 W.J. Deichmann Edwards and C. De Swarte Gifford, ‘Introduction. Restoring Women and Reclaiming Gender in Social Gospel Studies’, in: W.J. Deichmann Edwards and C. De Swarte Gifford (eds.), *Gender and the Social Gospel* (Urbana and Chicago 2003), 1-17, here 3.

the Social Gospel “for the most part [...] blended together as a unity.”¹⁹⁸ This is not surprising, because, as said above, Unitarianism fostered a climate in which the Social Gospel could germinate. Yet, with the exception of Francis Greenwood Peabody (1847-1936), whose 1900 publication *Jesus Christ and the Social Question* advanced the view that individuals and not social structures are to blame for social injustice,¹⁹⁹ Unitarians were not in leading positions in the Social Gospel when the movement reached its apogee in the early twentieth century. In fact, as Unitarianism gradually became less explicitly Christian and as liberal theological views gradually started to take root in other denominations, Unitarians lost their leading position in American liberal Protestantism in general. Theologically influenced by Ritschl and Harnack, the Social Gospel rested on an image of Jesus, who embodied middle-class values, as the preacher of the coming Kingdom of God in this world.²⁰⁰ A prime illustration thereof is given in *A Theology for the Social Gospel*, published in 1917.²⁰¹ Its author, the Baptist minister Walter Rauschenbusch (1861-1918), felt, in contrast to Peabody, that the configuration of contemporary society was sinful in itself. Though he kept aloof from party politics, seeing the materialist philosophy on which social democracy was based as incompatible with Christianity, Rauschenbusch appreciated the socialist labour movement. Others belonging to the socialist faction of the Social Gospel movement did become politically active and joined the Socialist Party of America.²⁰²

In the Dutch modernist movement, the Social Gospel did not receive much attention, not even from those with politically socialist leanings. This may seem odd at first glance, as the Social Gospel movement was largely based on liberal Protestant theology. Yet the lack of attention that Dutch modernists paid to the Social Gospel had precisely – and paradoxically – to do with its liberal theological basis. With regard to biblical scholarship, American liberal

198 Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology* II, 5.

199 F.G. Peabody, *Jesus Christ and the Social Question. An Examination of the Teaching of Jesus in its Relation to Some of the Problems of Modern Social Life* (New York 1900), 102.

200 Greenwood and Harris describe the Social Gospel as such as “a middle-class ideal.” Quoted from: Greenwood and Harris, *An Introduction to the Unitarian and Universalist Traditions*, 224. Dorrien concludes that “most of [the Social Gospel movement] preached a gospel of cultural optimism and a Jesus of middle-class idealism.” Quoted from: G.J. Dorrien, *Economy, Difference, Empire. Social Ethics for Social Justice* (New York 2010), 4. See also: Forsythe Fishburn, *The Fatherhood of God*, 12-20.

201 W. Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (New York 1917).

202 R.T. Handy, ‘Christianity and Socialism in America, 1900-1920’, *Church History* XX1.1 (1952), 39-45; C.C. Evans, *The Kingdom is Always But Coming. A Life of Walter Rauschenbusch* (Grand Rapids 2004), 243; McKanan, *Prophetic Encounters*, 134-150.

theology had little to offer to Dutch modernists – in this respect, the appreciation they showed for Parker's theological views was really an exception. American liberal theology did not generate original views; it largely depended on German scholarship, and came to absorb new trends within German liberal theology relatively late compared to Dutch modernism.²⁰³ Moreover, in contrast to Europe, ministers rather than university professors were the first to propagate liberal theological views in America. As a result, liberal theology was, to quote Dorrien, “considerably less scholarly and systematic” in America than in Europe – it only took root at theological faculties as late as the end of the nineteenth century.²⁰⁴ At that time, Dorrien argues, “on a host of specific issues, American theological liberalism was still in a formative phase.” Schleiermacher's approach to religion, which Dutch modernists had discarded long ago, was still the frame of reference in American liberal theology.²⁰⁵ From a Dutch modernist perspective, American liberal theology therefore ‘lagged behind’ and seemed rather ‘superficial’. This unfavourable impression that American liberal theology made upon Dutch modernists was even reinforced due to the circumstance that Unitarianism, the current that Dutch modernists basically identified with American liberal Protestantism as a whole, “produced no important theologians in the twentieth century.”²⁰⁶

In 1935, Lindeboom accordingly passed a devastating judgement on the kind of liberal theology on which the Social Gospel for the most part relied: in American liberal Protestantism, he stated, there was “much backwardness in the field of theology; in America, the ideas put forward by radical criticism or even by Schweitzer were hardly known, and Harnack virtually remained the ultimate point of reference in American liberal theology; a ‘scientific’, that is liberal, nineteenth-century image of Jesus is usually regarded as normative.”²⁰⁷ The radical criticism to which Lindeboom referred, and of which theologians united in the ‘Dutch Radical School’, such as A.D. Loman and W.C. van Manen, had been the prime champions, denied that the apostle Paul was the author of the New Testament epistles attributed to him.²⁰⁸ A. Schweitzer, to

203 L.J. Averill, *American Theology in the Liberal Tradition* (Philadelphia 1967), 30; Hutchison, *The Modernist Impulse in American Protestantism*, 22, 80, 122–123; Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology* 1, 404; A.G. Aubert, *The German Roots of Nineteenth-Century American Theology* (Oxford etc. 2013), 5.

204 Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology* 1, xxii.

205 Dorrien, *Ibid.*, 407.

206 Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology* 11, 4.

207 Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* 111, 194–195.

208 See: H. Detering, ‘The Dutch Radical Approach to the Pauline Epistles’, *Journal of Higher Criticism* 111.2 (1996), 163–193.

whom Lindeboom also referred, was an Alsatian liberal Lutheran theologian who severely criticised the nineteenth-century liberal Protestant endeavour to write a historically accurate biography of Jesus, the so-called '*Leben-Jesu-Forschung*' – the images of Jesus this endeavour had produced were nothing more than *projections* of liberal Protestants' own beliefs and ideals onto the Gospel protagonist.²⁰⁹ Such images, Lindeboom implied, had already largely become passé in Dutch modernism – a process that the growing influence of right-wing modernism had intensified. Lindeboom's criticism echoed those of the theologian W.A. Visser 't Hooft (1900–1985), a Remonstrant who had joined the Dutch Reformed Church in his twenties and had become an advocate of Karl Barth's neo-orthodoxy. Studying the movement in his 1928 dissertation, Visser 't Hooft concluded that the Social Gospel clung to a theology that liberal Protestants elsewhere had left behind.²¹⁰ Dutch modernists felt little to no enthusiasm for the Social Gospel, noting that it could apparently not do without this 'outdated' theology – even though Rauschenbusch's *A Theology for the Social Gospel* offered a basis for theological renewal. This at least was what P. Eldering argued in 1926, in the only article to appear in *De Hervorming* dealing with the Social Gospel – a fact that, in itself, is a clear indication of Dutch modernists' lack of interest in the movement. Rauschenbusch's book, he argued, contained some elements that, if further developed, were particularly appealing to right-wing modernists of a politically socialist persuasion: it offered, albeit feebly, new perspectives on 'sin' as the lack of willingness to build a new society, on 'conversion' as a turning away from individual *and* social wrongs, on Christ as the saviour of society and not only of individual souls, and on eschatology. For that reason, the late Roessingh had encouraged his students to read it.²¹¹ Yet, as the Remonstrant H.J. Heering (1912–2000) had to conclude in his 1937 dissertation, Rauschenbusch's spiritual heirs continued to see sin as a temporary human imperfection and adhere to individualist social ethics. This was what liberal Protestantism had been like in the nineteenth century – 'old-school modernism' in its classic form, to which hardly any Dutch modernist adhered anymore – and was hence, in Heering's opinion, antiquated.²¹²

209 In: Schweitzer, *Von Reimarus zu Wrede*.

210 W.A. Visser 't Hooft, *The Background of the Social Gospel in America* (Haarlem 1928), 156.

211 P. Eldering, 'Christen-socialisme', *De Hervorming* 1926–32 (7 August 1926), 250–251, here 250.

212 H.J. Heering, *De religieuze toekomstverwachting, in het bijzonder in de Amerikaanse theologie* (Amsterdam 1937), 94–102; H. de Jonge, *Walter Rauschenbusch en de werkelijkheid van het Godsrijk* (Gorinchem 2002), 179.

Compared to Dutch modernists, Unitarians were more strongly engaged in foreign missions. The name 'British and Foreign Unitarian Association' implied that Unitarians in the United Kingdom were dedicated to defending the cause of Unitarianism outside of their own country. The same was true of Unitarians in the United States. Yet the foreign missions in which Anglo-Saxon Unitarians invested differed from "ordinary types of missionary activity."²¹³ Instead of sending missionaries to remote areas of the world to found churches, baptise 'heathens', and initiate the latter into Christian customs and Christian worship, British and American Unitarians looked for manifestations of religiosity in which they recognised Unitarian-like views, and tried to foster and encourage these manifestations. In India, for example, Unitarians from both the United Kingdom and the United States were involved with the Brahmo Samaj, a religious and social reform movement within Hinduism referred to in chapter 5. For them, it was no problem that the leadership of the Brahmo Samaj did not identify with Christianity and preserved the religious imagery and symbols of Hinduism. They acknowledged its founder, Rammohun Roy (1772-1833), as "the most advanced Christian," recognising his understanding of religion and moral sense as fruits of a 'Christian spirit'.²¹⁴ As such, though not breaking with Hinduism, Roy was incorporated into Christianity after all – and the Brahmo Samaj with him. One of his spiritual heirs, Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902), was equally "merged into Christianity; his identity as a Hindu subsumed into a broader liberal Protestant view of universalized religion."²¹⁵ In Unitarianism, and more widely in liberal Protestantism, the hope that a free development of religious life would ultimately result in a universal religion, one religion for mankind as a whole, had long been cherished.²¹⁶ Liberal Protestants could only envision such a universal religion as one based on principles similar to their own, as liberal Protestantism was free of doctrines and was, in their view, the most humane religion.

In addition to India, American and British Unitarians were also active in Japan. As in India, they did not try to proactively spread Unitarianism, but became active in Japan only *after* the emergence of liberal tendencies within domestic religious life – in fact, the Unitarian-minded Japanese intellectual Yano Fumio (1850-1913) *invited* them to advance their cause in Japanese society

213 W.G. Tarrant, *Unitarianism* (London 1912), 90.

214 Quoted in: Greenwood and Harris, *An Introduction to the Unitarian and Universalist Traditions*, 96.

215 Quoted in: *Ibid.*

216 Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III, 225.

in 1886.²¹⁷ Speaking on behalf of the AUA, Clay MacCauley (1843-1925), who lived in Japan from 1889 until 1910, was eager to stress that

the initiative of the work was not with the American Unitarian Association. It came from the Japanese themselves [. . .]. It was at their suggestion that the Americans sent their representatives to Japan. They came not to impose a fixed theological creed upon your people [the Japanese, TK], but to inspire them with such principles as the duty of free inquiry, of the ultimate authority of reason, and of the supremacy of character in religion. They came, too, to confer, to reciprocate with your own religious believers, and to further the study of comparative theology and the sympathy of religions [. . .]. The Unitarian movement here was started as a spiritual method that would permeate religious bodies generally, rather than reproduce or build up a sectarian denomination.²¹⁸

As MacCauley's words make clear, Unitarians' foreign missionary activities resembled those of the German liberal Protestants united in the AEPMV: both Unitarians and the AEPMV limited their missionary activities to countries in which indigenous religious life already contained seeds of 'liberalism' or 'elements of truth' with which they could link up and that they merely tried to bring to full blossom. They therefore did not consider their activities an infringement on the free development of religious life in those countries. The rationale behind their approach to foreign missions was the idea that intellectual elites exert the most influence on social and cultural life. If these elites could be helped to develop an attitude to life based on liberal religious principles, the hope or expectation was that those principles would ultimately percolate into the rest of society as well.²¹⁹ Such intellectual elites only existed in countries that had already reached a certain level of civilisation, leading Unitarian missionaries to a focus on East Asia. Contrary to common parlance,

217 H. Ritter, *A History of Protestant Missions in Japan* (Tokyo 1898), 317; Greenwood and Harris, *An Introduction to the Unitarian and Universalist Traditions*, 99.

218 [C. MacCauley in:] 'Clay MacCauley Memorial Toro', *The Christian Register* LXXXIV.52 (28 December 1905), 1458-1459, here 1459.

219 Cf.: J.C. Schagen van Soelen, 'Feuilleton – De Allgem. Ev. Protest. Missions-Verein en de zending', *De Hervorming* 1886-21 (22 May 1886), 81-83, here 81. Outside of a missionary context, the same line of reasoning was used to justify the policy of *De Hervorming* of specifically targeting 'intellectuals' as of 1918. See, e.g.: A.H. van der Hoeve, 'Bondsleven – "De Hervorming"', *Ibid.* 1918-14 (6 April 1918), 55; A.H. van der Hoeve, 'Bondsleven – De nieuwe koers', *Ibid.* 1918-43 (26 October 1918), 171; A.H. van der Hoeve, 'Bondsleven – Aanpakken', *Ibid.* 1919-01 (4 January 1919), 3.

however, Unitarians spoke of 'foreign missions' not only in connection with their activities in India and Japan, but also in relation to support to Unitarian-minded groups in such culturally Christian countries as Norway, Czechoslovakia, and the Philippines.²²⁰

That Unitarians were more strongly involved in foreign missions than Dutch modernists can now be explained. Unitarians became active only in countries in which signs of liberal religious life were visible, and only because they were asked for assistance. They were just as averse to foreign missions in a traditional sense as were Dutch modernists. The discussion on foreign missions among the latter revolved around the question of whether support should be given to the *Nederlandsch Zendeling-Genootschap*, which was primarily active in the interior of the Dutch East Indies. In these 'uncivilised' areas, indigenous religious life did not (yet) contain any elements with which modernists could link up. There, missionary activities would thus indeed be an infringement on the free development of religious life. As a result, Dutch modernist enthusiasm for foreign missions was rather low.

While, as argued in chapter 8, the Dutch modernist movement did not manage to exert a lasting attraction on the key figures of Dutch intellectual and cultural life, failed to gain a large following among the masses, and hence relied on bourgeois support, Unitarians in Britain and the United States equally struggled to get a strong foothold in the lower classes, but did play a disproportionately large and lasting role in intellectual and cultural life.²²¹ This difference needs to be examined in closer detail if it is to be sufficiently explained – and this is not the right place to do so –, but it was at least partially caused by the circumstance that Unitarianism in Britain and the United States was more strongly involved in progressive politics than was liberal Protestantism in continental Europe. With regard to social background, only a subtle difference existed: Unitarianism in Britain and America relied just as heavily on bourgeois support as liberal Protestantism elsewhere, but was particularly as-

220 Looking back on the history of Unitarian missionary activities in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the Unitarian minister Josiah R. Bartlett (1913-1997) characterised these activities as follows: "Our foreign mission work, if one can call it that, seems to be largely a matter of maintaining correspondence with elements of theological liberalism in other lands." Quoted from: J.R. Bartlett, 'Is Unitarianism Parasitic on the Christian Tradition?', *The Christian Register* CXX.7 (1 April 1941), 129-132, here 131.

221 R.K. Webb, 'Quakers and Unitarians', in: D.G. Paz (ed.), *Nineteenth-Century English Religious Traditions. Retrospect and Prospect* (Westport and London 1995), 85-115, here 100; P.K. Conkin, *American Originals. Homemade Varieties of Christianity* (Chapel Hill 1997), 74; D.W. Howe, *What Hath God Wrought. The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (Oxford etc. 2007), 617.

sociated with the *upper* middle class and, especially in America, even with the upper class.²²² In the United States, Unitarianism initially recruited most of its adherents from New England's educated, moneyed, and politically leading elite, giving it a high-class image that it never got rid of. In fact, as the Unitarian Universalist theologian Mark W. Harris argues in a 2011 publication, Unitarians fostered this image themselves:

We perceive the people who are from another class as being so different from us in values. [...] We are reticent to embrace those we perceive as working-class, uneducated, or narrow-minded. [...] Our 'all' is the narrow social circle of the upper-middle class, the educated few, or the like-minded liberals that we attract. [...] While our Principles affirm that we would welcome someone who is very different from us, many of our members feel we should recruit among those who match the demographic characteristics of our current membership. New members should fit in or be like us for us to grow.²²³

While Unitarians have often been labelled as an 'elite', the label Harris uses as the title of his book, it would be wrong to depict them as *elitist*, as a group whose main concern was to secure its own position of power in society. On the contrary, throughout their history, Unitarians have been highly involved in movements aiming to empower African Americans, women, and sexual minorities.²²⁴ Moreover, they have been among the most ardent advocates of initiatives aimed at improving the quality of life of the lower classes. Nonetheless, as Harris notes, throughout Unitarian history the inclusive character of Unitarianism, resting on the principle of individual fulfilment, has been implicitly imbued with class-consciousness, i.e. the assumption that individual

222 J.L. Adams et al., *Unitarians Face a New Age. The Report of the Commission of Appraisal to the American Unitarian Association* (Boston 1936), 315; R.E. Sykes, *Massachusetts Unitarianism and Social Change. A Religious Social System in Transition, 1780-1870* ([Minneapolis] 1966), 135; G. Parsons, 'From Dissenters to Free Churchmen. The Transitions of Victorian Nonconformity', in: G. Parsons (ed.), *Religion in Victorian Britain 1. Traditions* (Manchester and New York 1988), 67-116, here 80; J.A. Buehrens and F. Church, *A Chosen Faith. An Introduction to Unitarian Universalism* (Boston [1989] 1998), 54; P.D. Airhart, 'Unitarian Universalist Association', in: H.J. Hillerbrand (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Protestantism IV* (London and New York 2004), 578-593, here 578; A. Browde, *Faith Under Siege. A History of Unitarian Theology* (New York and Bloomington 2008), 81.

223 M.W. Harris, *Elite. Uncovering Classism in Unitarian Universalist History* (Boston 2011), 27, 29, 112.

224 *Ibid.*, 119-124.

fulfilment or spiritual development, as explained with regard to Dutch modernism in chapter 6, is linked to upward mobility on the socio-economic ladder.

In the introductory chapter, the argument that a tighter organisation would have enabled the Dutch modernist movement to maintain a stronger position in social life has been challenged. The subsequent chapters have argued that this was so not only because modernists, in spite of their rhetoric, shrunk back from thoroughly reforming existing church and social structures, but also because modernist discourse lacked appeal to a non-bourgeois audience. As discussed in chapters 6 and 7, modernist discourse was permeated with bourgeois ideals, bourgeois values, and bourgeois interests. Harris's analysis of classism in Unitarian history reinforces the claim that I have made in the introduction: after all, American Unitarianism was much better organised than Dutch modernism and still failed to captivate the masses. As Harris argues, class-consciousness was a decisive element in this. His observations, and those made in this chapter with regard to the bourgeois character of liberal Protestantism in other countries, give grounds for the claim that class-consciousness was not only intrinsic to Dutch modernism, but that it was intrinsic to liberal Protestantism as such.²²⁵

10 Liberal Protestants Elsewhere

Next to the *Protestantenverein* in Germany, the associations modelled after the *Protestantenverein* in other countries, and Unitarians in Britain and the United States, there were communities of liberal Protestants elsewhere – some better organised than others. The *Vrye Protestantse Kerk* (Free Protestant Church) in the South African city of Cape Town, established in 1867, was one of these communities. Though completely overlooked in Lindeboom's *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme*, the *Vrye Protestantse Kerk* had strong ties with Dutch

225 H. Richard Niebuhr lists Unitarianism among the 'churches of the middle class', attributing its rise to the emergence of a "middle-class psychology" in which rationalism, intellectual development, individual autonomy, a non-fatalistic attitude to life, and human perfectibility were prevailing ideals. See: H.R. Niebuhr, *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* (Hamden [1929] 1954), 77-105, here 80-81. See also: J.M. Floyd Thomas, *The Origins of Black Humanism in America. Reverend Ethelred Brown and the Unitarian Church* (New York 2008), 63-64. Referring to Unitarianism in Britain, Parsons argues: "Unitarianism was always destined to be firmly middle class. It was never remotely likely to possess widespread appeal or to have much impact on the mass of working-class 'habitual neglecters of religion.'" Quoted from: Parsons, 'From Dissenters to Free Churchmen', 80.

modernism. Its founder D.P. Faure (1842-1916) had studied at the theological faculty in Leiden in the first half of the 1860s. Back in South Africa, he asked one of his Leiden professors, L.W.E. Rauwenhoff, advice on how to develop congregational life.²²⁶ Rauwenhoff, whose objections against the institution of the church have been discussed in chapter 4, made it clear that he saw the *Vrye Protestantse Kerk* as a realisation of his ideal of the faith community of the future, praising it as "the first example of a free congregation based on modernist principles" in his 1871 *Geschiedenis van het protestantisme (History of Protestantism)*,²²⁷ and praising its founder as "the man who had entered into combat with confessionalism the right way" at the 1877 general NPB meeting.²²⁸ Those words likely gave Ph.R. Hugenholtz and P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr. the final push to establish the Free Congregation in Amsterdam, as the following sequence of events can hardly be a mere coincidence. The 1877 NPB meeting, which the Hugenholtz brothers both attended, was held on 30 October. Moreover, on 10 November, F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr., who sympathised with his half-brothers, wrote an editorial in *De Hervorming* in which he held the *Vrye Protestantse Kerk* up as an example for those toying with the idea of creating free congregations in the Netherlands. The Hugenholtz brothers finally left the Dutch Reformed Church on 30 November.²²⁹ They later showed recognition of Faure as a kindred spirit, inviting him to give a sermon in the Free Congregation in 1884.²³⁰ In the course of the twentieth century, the *Vrye Protestantse Kerk* began to explicitly identify itself as a Unitarian congregation and to seek alliance with American Unitarians.²³¹

Faure, seeing J.H. Scholten as the biggest influence on the development of his theological views, initially "considered the newest theological views to be acceptable to all, and thought that mankind would be better off if it could be converted to [liberal Protestantism]." Later in life, however, he changed his mind, now holding that liberal Protestants should refrain from making converts among orthodox Protestants and Roman Catholics. Because the latter were "spiritually still children" and hence incapable of comprehending the

226 F. Hale, 'The Origins of the Free Protestant Church in South Africa. David P. Faure contra Dutch Reformed Calvinism', *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* XXXIII.1 (2007), 327-350.

227 Rauwenhoff, *Geschiedenis van het protestantisme* III, 429.

228 [L.W.E. Rauwenhoff in: F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'De vrije protestantsche kerk in de Kaapstad', *De Hervorming* 1877-45 (10 November 1877), 1.

229 *Handelingen NPB* 1877, 35; [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'De vrije protestantsche kerk in de Kaapstad', *De Hervorming* 1877-45 (10 November 1877), 1; Cossee, 'De stichting van de Vrije Gemeente', 109.

230 D.P. Faure, *My Life and Times* (Cape Town 1907), 114.

231 M.W. Harris, *The A to Z of Unitarian Universalism* (Lanham etc. 2009), 439-440; A. Nash, *The Dialectical Tradition in South Africa* (New York and London 2009), 219, note 32.

true meaning of liberal Protestant views, introducing these views to them would lead to their “moral ruin.” Orthodox Protestants’ and Roman Catholics’ moral life, Faure now reasoned, was solely based on the ethical prescriptions of their churches – prescriptions they accepted because they took their churches to be institutions of salvation. If this last belief, which was exactly what liberal Protestants challenged, were to disappear all of a sudden, then orthodox Protestants and Roman Catholics would have to rely on their own moral sense, which they did not have, and could not develop, as they lacked the spiritual capacities to do so.²³² In the early twentieth century, Faure even became disappointed in modern theology as such – particularly in the inability of modern theology to prove, as it contended, that the human soul was indeed immortal. No longer believing that the force of reason was powerful enough to belie orthodox and materialist outlooks on life, he therefore began to advocate that liberal Protestantism should be supplemented with Spiritism.²³³

In Belgium, Protestantism was numerically just as marginal as in neighbouring France, being stronger in Brussels and French-speaking Wallonia than in Dutch-speaking Flanders. In the nineteenth century, nearly all Protestant congregations in Belgium belonged either to the *Bond der Protestantisch-Evangelische Kerken van het Koninkrijk België* (League of Protestant Evangelical Churches of the Kingdom of Belgium), comprising those Reformed and Lutheran congregations that had existed on Belgian soil before 1839, or to the *Belgische Christelijke Zendingskerk* (Belgian Christian Missionary Church), which had been founded in 1849 on Calvinist principles with the intention of evangelising among the Belgian people.²³⁴ The latter was homogeneously orthodox, having relations with one of the denominations that would merge into the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands in 1892, while in the former, more room was left for liberal theological views.²³⁵ One sign thereof was that Th.E. Bost (1828-1910), the then minister of the congregation in the Walloon town of

232 [D.P. Faure in: J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Een geestverwant in Zuid-Afrika’, *De Hervorming* 1892-39 (24 September 1892), 153-154; Faure, *My Life and Times*, 27.

233 B.A. Zuiddam, ‘Reason’s Dead End in David Faure. Why the Cape’s Earliest Liberal Minister Embraced Spiritualism’, *In die Skriflig* XLIII.2 (2009), 271-289, here 277-279, 283-284.

234 A good overview of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century history of Belgian Protestantism is given in: H.R. Boudin and M. Blok, *Synodaal gedenkboek van de Verenigde Protestantse Kerk in België | Mémorial synodal de l’Église Protestante Unie de Belgique* (Brussel 1992).

235 Notwithstanding this relationship, the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands would found churches of their own in the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium, the first of which was established in Brussels in 1894. See: T.E.M. Krijger, ‘Een Hollandse stad op de Vlaamse berg. De gereformeerde kerken als protestantse geloofsgemeenschap in rooms-katholiek Vlaanderen (1894-1978)’, *Historisch Tijdschrift GKN* XXIV (June 2012), 3-27.

Verviers, could publish his *Le protestantisme libéral* in 1865 without being subjected to disciplinary measures by the synod of the League of Churches.²³⁶ The modern theological ideas Bost put forward in this publication met with some response in the circle of leading Belgian liberal politicians and intellectuals. The most prominent of these individuals was the historian of religion and statesman E.F.A. Goblet d'Alviella (1846-1925), who contributed to the founding of the *Église protestante libérale* (Liberal Protestant Church) in Brussels in 1881.²³⁷ Its minister J. Hocart (1843-1923) addressed his sermons to a small audience mostly consisting of, to quote the historian H.R. Boudin, "university professors, lawyers, and high-ranking government officials – in short, an elite of which Goblet d'Alviella was the pivot. It resembled the proverbial army of a South American country: many generals and few soldiers."²³⁸ In other words, the *Église protestante libérale* lacked lower-class members, although Hocart and Goblet d'Alviella did seek to spread liberal Protestant ideas and ideals outside of their small elite circle through social work. In 1912, they were involved in the creation of the *Comité belge d'initiative du Christianisme progressif et libéral* (Belgian Action Committee for the Advancement of Progressive and Liberal Christianity). According to a brief item in *De Hervorming*, this committee aimed at making liberal Protestantism better known to the Belgian public at large by conducting activities similar to those of the NPB.²³⁹ Yet, due to the outbreak of the First World War, it never really got off the ground and quickly died a silent death.²⁴⁰ Next to the *Église protestante libérale* in Brussels, which came to be known as the '*Foyer de l'âme*' ('Home of the Soul'), a second liberal Protestant congregation, also called '*Foyer de l'âme*' to accentuate its ties with the one in the Belgian capital, came into being in Charleroi in 1936. Within the League of Churches, the congregations in Verviers, Liège, and Ghent are known to have had a liberal orientation in around 1900.²⁴¹

236 Th.E. Bost, *Le protestantisme libéral* (Paris 1865); H.R. Boudin, 'Eugène Goblet d'Alviella et le protestantisme libéral', in: A. Dierkens (ed.), *Eugène Goblet d'Alviella. Historien et franc-maçon* (Brussels 1995), 35-49, here 37.

237 *Ibid.*, 43; G.L.J. Liagre, 'Les débuts de l'Église libérale de Bruxelles (1877-1888)', *Bulletin de la Société Royale d'Histoire du Protestantisme Belge* CXXXV (2006), 1-38.

238 Boudin, 'Eugène Goblet d'Alviella et le protestantisme libéral', 46.

239 [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Berichten, enz. – Vrijzinnig-godsdienstigen in België', *De Hervorming* 1913-47 (22 November 1913), 376.

240 Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III, 153-154.

241 E.G. Léonard, *Histoire générale du protestantisme* III. *Déclin et renouveau (XVIII^e-XX^e siècle)* (Paris 1964), 305; J. Temmerman, *Van Réveil tot liberaal protestantisme. Geschiedenis van de protestantse Brabantdamkerk te Gent tijdens de 19^{de} eeuw* (Brussel 1996), 107-170; G.L.J. Liagre, *Edmond Wiétrich en de geschiedenis van de vrijzinnig-protestantse "Foyer de l'Ame" in Charleroi* (Brussel 1998), 15.

Although lacking an organisation of their own, the small liberal Protestant community in Belgium tried to maintain relations with the NPB and its sister associations, delegating ministers to the international conferences of religious liberals in the early twentieth century. At the third of these conferences, held in Geneva in 1905, one of them made a speech stating that the desire to formulate a confession of faith was at the time not only felt among some Dutch modernists. Arnold Rey (1867-1940), a minister in Liège who was originally from Switzerland, affirmed that it was “a necessity” to set down in writing what modernists believed in. Holding up orthodoxy as an example in this respect, Rey argued that having a communal declaration of faith, one explicitly *not* written as an intellectual critique of supernaturalist Christianity, would help liberal Protestants to become more determined and to make more propaganda for their convictions.²⁴² Its effectuation was shelved and eventually abandoned, but Rey’s plea was an important sign of the times. It showed that modernists outside of the Netherlands had just as much difficulty in describing their faith as anything other than a negation of orthodoxy on rational grounds, and that the dissatisfaction therewith was increasing among them as well.²⁴³ This dissatisfaction, in turn, was rooted in a larger trend in Western culture at the beginning of the twentieth century of criticising nineteenth-century intellectualism,²⁴⁴ of which old-school modernism was an exponent. Moreover, as becomes clear from Rey’s plea, non-Dutch liberal Protestants felt marginalised too. Orthodoxy flourished and exerted considerably more influence than modernism, Rey noted – and managed to do so, as Dutch modernist Knappert had also implied in 1903, because it had a confession of faith from which it derived clear objectives to realise in society and with which it could easily present itself to the masses.²⁴⁵

In Italy, there were two tiny centres of liberal Protestant activity. One was centred around F. Bracciforti (1827-1907), a professor of English who foun-

242 A. Rey, ‘De l’opportunité de formuler une déclaration de foi du Christianisme libéral’, in: Montet (ed.), *Actes du III^{me} Congrès International du Christianisme Libéral et Progressif*, 204-213.

243 In the circle of the Swedish *Protestantföreningen*, a declaration of faith had already been formulated in 1885. In response, the editors of *De Protestant* had stated that they could more or less agree with the content of this declaration, but that they strongly rejected the formulation of a creed-like declaration as such: it would pin individuals down to formulations that they had not chosen for themselves. See: ‘Mededeelingen en berichten – Uit Zweden’, *De Protestant* 111.8 (21 February 1885), 4.

244 Baneke, *Synthetisch denken*, 119-142.

245 L. Knappert, ‘Roeping’, *De Hervorming* 1903-23 (6 June 1903), 177-178; 1905-25 (20 June 1905), 193-195.

ded a small Unitarian community in Milan in 1870.²⁴⁶ Another was an association called '*Associazione italiana dei liberi credenti*' ('Italian Association of Liberal Believers'), founded in Venice in 1911 by the Methodist minister G. Conte (1859-1917).²⁴⁷ Writing on Conte, the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* astutely noticed that "the liberal religious movement in predominantly Roman Catholic or orthodox Protestant countries always depends on a leading individual, with whom it can more or less be identified."²⁴⁸ Indeed, in those countries dealt with above that either had a minuscule Protestant community or lacked the infrastructure necessary for liberal Protestant ideas to be spread, a few leading men came to personify the liberal Protestant cause; this was the case with the Kovács brothers in Hungary, Pfeiff and Von Bergen in Sweden, Tallmeister and Kuljus in Estonia, Faure in South Africa, and Goblet d'Alviella and Hocart in Belgium. The same held true for Denmark and Norway, the ecclesial scenes of which were comparable to that of Sweden. Kristofer Janson (1841-1917), the founder of a Unitarian congregation in Oslo in 1895, was for a long time the only Norwegian minister who self-identified as a liberal Protestant. In Denmark, the standard of liberal Protestantism was borne by the Unitarian-minded minister U. Birkedal (1852-1931). He established *Det fri Kirkesamfund* (The Free Congregation) in 1900, located in Copenhagen and Aarhus.²⁴⁹

As of 1897, a movement fuelled by a liberal Protestant spirit emerged in Austria. Although its aim of stimulating conversions from Roman Catholicism to Protestantism had less to do with theological than with nationalistic motivations, this '*Los von Rom*' ('Away from Rome') movement fostered a mentality

²⁴⁶ R. Rosso and L.M.F. Sudbury, *Introduzione al cristianesimo unitariano* (s.l. 2012), 27. See also: Wilbur, *A History of Unitarianism. Socinianism and its Antecedents*, 375-376; M.H. Schippers, 'Ter nagedachtenis van een geestverwant in den vreemde', *De Hervorming* 1907-19 (11 May 1907), 146-147.

²⁴⁷ G. Spini, *Italia liberale e protestanti* (Turin 2002), 328. The organisation changed its name into '*Associazione per il progresso morale e religioso*' ('Association for Moral and Religious Progress') in 1921. See: A. Nesti, *Alle radici della Toscana contemporanea. Vita religiosa e società dalla fine dell'Ottocento al crollo della mezzadria* (Milan 2008), 897. See also: H. Oort, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Een godsdienstige beweging in Florence', *De Hervorming* 1921-35 (3 September 1921), 275-276; O.H., 'Godsdienst en maatschappij – Een godsdienstig zedelijke vereeniging in Italië', *Ibid.* 1922-50 (16 December 1922), 396.

²⁴⁸ 'Kerknieuws – De vrijzinnig godsdienstige beweging in Italië', *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* LXXXIV.138 (20 May 1927), evening paper c, 4.

²⁴⁹ 'Kerknieuws – Vrijzinnig godsdienstig leven in Denemarken', *Ibid.* LXXXIV.109 (21 April 1927), evening paper c, 2; M.Ch. Uldall-Hansen, *Kristne kættere og unitarisme* (s.l. 1991), 121-125; F. Hale, 'Unitarian Origins in Norway during the 1890s and Early in the Twentieth Century', *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* XXXI.1 (2005), 225-246.

that was both oriented to Germany and stamped by German *Kulturprotestantismus*.²⁵⁰ It accentuated that Austrians were Germans and considered Protestantism to be the defining characteristic of German culture as well as the force that was responsible for the political, economic, and intellectual preponderance of Germany over Catholic Habsburg Austria. In the *Los von Rom* movement, the all-dominant Roman Catholic Church with its international character and its rigid dogmas was seen as the suppressor of the true German nature of the Austrian people and was blamed for hindering Austria from flourishing.²⁵¹ Because of the apparent liberal Protestant influences in the Austrian *Los von Rom* movement, the German *Protestantenverein* and the *Christliche Welt* eagerly supported it.²⁵² In NPB circles, it was followed with interest as well. Although it failed to gain popular support – only a small proportion of the middle classes, particularly among German speakers in the Austrian crown lands of Bohemia and Moravia, proved susceptible to its pan-German, anti-Catholic message²⁵³ – and although it was not concerned with the spread of modern theological views as such,²⁵⁴ the *Los von Rom* movement received quite a lot of attention in *De Hervorming*. The magazine kept a remarkably close track of its development and incited Dutch modernists to financially support it every year between 1903 and 1934.²⁵⁵

In the aftermath of the First World War, a similar movement that wanted to break with Rome for nationalistic reasons, and that was equally supported

250 R. Leeb, 'Der österreichische Protestantismus und die Los-von-Rom-Bewegung', in: Dantine, Thien and Weinzierl (eds.), *Protestantische Mentalitäten*, 195–224, here 199–200. Albertin sees *Kulturprotestantismus* even as a "precondition" for the emergence of the *Los von Rom* movement. See: L. Albertin, *Nationalismus und Protestantismus in der österreichischen Los-von-Rom-Bewegung um 1900* (Cologne 1953), 31–42.

251 *Ibid.*, 199; H.W. Smith, *German Nationalism and Religious Conflict. Culture, Ideology, Politics, 1870–1914* (Princeton 1995), 206; C.E. Murdock, *Changing Places. Society, Culture, and Territory in the Saxon-Bohemian Borderlands, 1870–1946* (Ann Arbor 2012), 70.

252 Leeb, 'Der österreichische Protestantismus und die Los-von-Rom-Bewegung', 200, 209; Hübinger, *Kulturprotestantismus und Politik*, 296; Pichler, *Bürgertum und Protestantismus*, 19.

253 Smith, *German Nationalism and Religious Conflict*, 211–214; G. Reingrabner, *Protestanten in Österreich. Geschichte und Dokumentation* (Wien etc. 1981), 238.

254 In urban congregations, the *Los von Rom* movement did manage to foster a liberal climate. See: Leeb, 'Der österreichische Protestantismus und die Los-von-Rom-Bewegung', 208.

255 As the liberal Reformed minister A.L.Th. van der Ven (1868–1934) made clear, modernists' interest in the *Los von Rom* movement was motivated by the expectation that it would set a precedent for Roman Catholics in the Netherlands, encouraging them to break with Rome as well. [A.L.Th. van der Ven in:] 'Berichten, enz. – Zestiende Protestantendag in de classis Eindhoven', *De Hervorming* 1904–45 (5 November 1904), 357.

by liberal Protestants in other countries, emerged among Czechs in Bohemia and Moravia, who were now united with Slovaks and Ruthenians in the independent state of Czechoslovakia. Backed by the Reformed liberal Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk (1850-1937), who had been elected as the first president of Czechoslovakia in 1918, this movement claimed that the Roman Catholic Church had hindered the Czechs and Slovaks from being themselves. The Church of Rome was identified with the Austrian-Habsburg regime, which had denied Czechs and Slovaks the cultural and political autonomy that ethnic Germans and Hungarians had enjoyed. Moreover, it had ruthlessly obstructed the development of a Czechoslovak identity, the seeds of which had been sown by the early fifteenth-century anti-papal and anti-German movement around the Bohemian priest Jan Hus (±1369-1415). Advocating the use of vernacular Czech at Mass and modifying the Czech alphabet, Hus, whom the Roman Catholic Church sentenced to the stake and whose followers had been persecuted as heretics, was glorified as the *pater patriae* in the Czechoslovak equivalent of the *Los von Rom* movement.²⁵⁶ The anti-Roman sentiments that this movement tried to provoke were already slumbering among part of the Czech Catholic clergy, which, feeling inspired by the spirit of liberation that manifested itself in Czech society, called for the right to marry as well as the use of Czech in the Mass instead of Latin.²⁵⁷ When Rome refused their demands, these priests founded the *Církev československá* (Czechoslovak Church) on 8 January 1920.

Although it was a 'secession' from the Roman Catholic Church that kept an episcopal structure and only implemented modest liturgical reforms, and although it initially associated itself with the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Czechoslovak Church sought an alliance with the international liberal Protestant community in the course of the 1920s.²⁵⁸ As of 1927, it sent delegates to the international conferences of religious liberals.²⁵⁹ It was accordingly labelled

256 P. Ramet, 'Christianity and National Heritage among the Czechs and Slovaks', in: P. Ramet (ed.), *Religion and Nationalism in Soviet and East European Politics* (Durham and London 1989), 264-285, here 272-273; A. Suppan, 'Catholic People's Parties in East Central Europe. The Bohemian Lands and Slovakia', in: W. Kaiser and H. Wahnout (eds.), *Political Catholicism in Europe 1918-1945* (London 2004), 178-192, here 181-182.

257 C.G. Cravens, *Culture and Customs of the Czech Republic and Slovakia* (Westport and London 2006), 34; J. Pollard, *The Papacy in the Age of Totalitarianism, 1914-1958* (Oxford 2014), 226.

258 Cravens, *Culture and Customs of the Czech Republic and Slovakia*, 34.

259 F.M. Hník, 'The Czechoslovak Church and the Christian World', in: F.M. Hník, A. Spisár and F. Kovář, *The Czechoslovak Church* (Prague 1937), 9-52, here 33, 40.

'Unitarian' in English-language publications.²⁶⁰ Its doctrinally liberal character might have given it a particular appeal to some, but there were three peculiarities with regard to its membership that suggest that those who joined the Czechoslovak Church did so first and foremost joined for patriotic reasons. First, the Czechoslovak Church grew incredibly fast during the first decades of its existence: in 1930, it already had 800,000 members, corresponding to 5.4 per cent of the population.²⁶¹ Before its founding, however, no massive longing for doctrinal freedom had been apparent among Czechs and Slovaks. Second, whereas liberal Protestant communities in other countries mostly consisted of members with a bourgeois background, the Czechoslovak Church recruited most of its members from "the socially dependent classes." In comparison to both the Czechoslovak population as a whole and the social composition of other churches in Czechoslovakia, lower- and lower-middle-class individuals were disproportionately represented in the membership of the Czechoslovak Church.²⁶² Apparently, lower-class individuals in Czechoslovakia had an incentive to join a church with a doctrinally liberal orientation that those in other countries did not. In light of the Czechoslovak context and the claim of the Czechoslovak Church to be the patron of the national identity, it seems safe to presume that this incentive was a nationalistic one. Third, the Czechoslovak Church had hardly any support among Slovaks. The latter thus lacked an incentive to join that Czechs did have. It made sense to depict the Roman Catholic Church as the ecclesial twin of a regime that had suppressed indigenous ethnic culture in Bohemia and Moravia, which were under Austrian jurisdiction prior to 1918, but not to depict it as such in Slovakia. Whereas Slovaks were predominantly Catholic, Slovakia had been an integral part of predominantly Lutheran Upper Hungary. There, membership in the Roman Catholic Church had thus served rather as an identity marker, as a sign of Slovak resistance against Magyarisation.²⁶³ Moreover, Slovaks identified less

260 E.g.: J. Hajda, 'Sociological Aspects', in: J. Hajda (ed.), *A Study of Contemporary Czechoslovakia* (Chicago 1955), 56-256, here 242; D. Rodnick, *The Strangled Democracy. Czechoslovakia 1948-1969* (Lubbock 1970), 96. The first patriarch of the Czechoslovak Church, Karel Farský (1880-1927), followed a pro-Unitarian course. See: L. Némec, *The Czechoslovak Heresy and Schism. The Emergence of a National Czechoslovak Church* (Philadelphia 1975), 60. An actual Unitarian congregation was established in Prague in 1921. See: Harris, *The A to Z of Unitarian Universalism*, 135-136.

261 B.F. Abrams, *The Struggle for the Soul of the Nation. Czech Culture and the Rise of Communism* (Lanham etc. 2004), 78.

262 Hník, 'The Czechoslovak Church and the Christian World', 17-21. See also: Abrams, *The Struggle for the Soul of the Nation*, 79.

263 J. Luxmoore and J. Babiuch, *The Vatican and the Red Flag. The Struggle for the Soul of Eastern Europe* (London and New York 1999), 34.

with the idea of Hussite heritage as the foundation of a shared Czechoslovak identity, than did Czechs.²⁶⁴

11 Dutch Modernists and Like-Minded Groups Abroad: An Evaluation

Notwithstanding the influence specific national circumstances had on their development, modernists in the Netherlands and related liberal Protestant groups elsewhere seem to have developed along similar lines. In every country, high expectations accompanied the emergence of groups that wanted to reform church and social life on a theologically 'modern' or liberal basis. These groups all felt that they were the true heirs to the sixteenth-century Reformers, continuing the latter's perceived aim of building a new world and bringing it to completion. They all believed that the kind of Christianity to which they gave shape would one day predominate. Yet nowhere did these expectations come true: liberal Protestants failed to outgrow orthodoxy in church life, build the faith community of tomorrow, exert a lasting attraction on the intellectual and cultural elite of the nation, and reach the masses. Their numerical growth stalled, and, in those countries in which Protestantism historically had a strong position, their influence on church and social life even gradually diminished. This disappointment over the inability of liberal Protestantism to be the reform movement it wanted to be led some to explore new ways – not only theologically, developing either in a more orthodox or a less Christian direction, but also socially, giving priority to social issues over ecclesial and theological matters, and politically, embracing political socialism and seeking alliances with the socialist labour movement. Contacts with like-minded groups abroad were therefore cherished, as they reminded liberal Protestants that they were part of an international movement, sharing the same lot as others abroad, struggling with the same issues, and to enduring the same hardships as these foreign co-religionists. Moreover, such contacts showed others in their own countries that liberal Protestants were part of an international movement, who as such should not be regarded as utterly insignificant. Accordingly, it was no coincidence that the international conferences of religious liberals were first held when Unitarians' influence in Britain and the United States was already waning and when a feeling of marginalisation was growing among the members of the NPB and its foreign sister associations.

264 A. Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle. The Myth of Czechoslovakia in Europe, 1914-1948* (Oxford etc. 2009), 123.

The observation that the development of liberal Protestant groups outside of the Netherlands ran parallel to the development of the Dutch modernist movement – indeed, that a similar *pattern* becomes apparent in the history of all groups affiliated to the IARF in the 1930s – suggests that the ultimate marginalisation of the Dutch modernist movement was first of all due to internal factors, to elements intrinsic to liberal Protestantism itself. As analysed above, liberal Protestantism not only had a bourgeois character in the Netherlands, but also abroad.²⁶⁵ This reinforces the argument made in the introductory chapter, and further developed in the concluding chapter below, that both Dutch modernists' unfulfilled expectations and the lack of appeal of the Dutch modernist movement should in large part, if not primarily, be attributed to this movement's bourgeois character and the consequences this had in practice.

265 W.G. Tarrant, 'The Relations of Liberal Religion to Social Reforms', in: Montet (ed.), *Actes du 111^{me} Congrès International du Christianisme Libéral et Progressif*, 190-195, here 190. See also: W.G. Tarrant, 'De verhouding tusschen vrijzinnigen godsdienst en maatschappelijke hervormingen', *De Hervorming* 1905-47 (25 November 1905), 369-370, here 369.

Concluding Remarks

1 Recapitulating the History of the Modernist Movement

In November 1930, the then editor-in-chief of *De Hervorming* D. Drijver evaluated the history of the *Protestantenbond* on the occasion of the diamond jubilee of this association, which had spanned the full extent of the modernist movement almost from its founding onwards. *Almost*, because, as Drijver recalled, “many kingpins of the modernist movement” had initially been hesitant to join the NPB, feeling that its founders overestimated its potential to reform church life. While these modernist kingpins had ultimately aligned themselves with the NPB nonetheless, the subsequent history of the association, Drijver argued, had fully justified their initial hesitation. True, the NPB had contributed to the development of liberal Protestantism in the Netherlands by organising religious services for individuals who might have otherwise renounced their religion altogether, as well as by establishing Sunday schools, issuing hymn books and tracts, and participating in the framework of the CC. Yet its sixty-year history proved that its founders’ expectations had been far too high indeed. It had not become the community of faith that would replace the existing churches, and had not even managed to realise changes within these churches: the NPB “has been able to alter neither the disorder in the Dutch Reformed Church, nor the spirit of being a religious *corps d’élite* among Mennonites and Remonstrants, nor Lutherans’ attachment to their own church.” Realising its continued lack influence in church life, the NPB had in due course decided to increase its efforts to influence social life. However, it had failed in this endeavour as well. In the past decades, Drijver observed, all kinds of social reforms had been carried through, but the NPB could not be credited for these at all. Regarding social issues, the NPB “has restricted itself mainly to formulating moderate ideals and to taking some small activities in hand.” All in all, the NPB “has not made deep inroads on the religious soul of the Dutch.” Drijver did not want to conclude from this that the NPB no longer had a future, but he made perfectly clear that its achievements so far had been few.¹

Looking back over the development of the NPB since its founding in 1870, Drijver characterised the history of the Dutch modernist movement in a nutshell. The NPB fulfilled the role of “the organisational spider in the modernist

1 D. Drijver, ‘Na zestig jaren’, *De Hervorming* 1930-10 (8 November 1930), 71.

web,”² to allude to a Dutch expression – a role it gradually lost after the creation of the CC in 1923. Drijver delineated the history of the modernist movement as a story of decline: emerging with much vigour in the 1850s and 1860s, the modernist movement gradually lost its appeal and significance afterwards, and fell utterly short of first-generation modernists’ expectations. Drijver was neither the first nor the last to propose this narrative while dealing with the development of the modernist movement. As discussed in the introductory chapter, most studies on the Dutch modernist movement are either entirely descriptive or feature arguments that, in my view, cannot sufficiently explain why the rapid, short-lived rise of the modernist movement was followed by a gradual fall. As I see it, an explanation should first and foremost be sought in what was intrinsic to the modernist movement itself.

2 Interpreting Modernist History: The Significance of the NPB and *De Hervorming*

In 1858, the Dutch Reformed minister D.Th. Huet was probably the first to refer to a current that was emerging within Protestantism at that time as ‘modernism’. Also known as ‘liberal Protestantism’, particularly outside of the Netherlands, modernism was, and continued to be, interdenominational and diffuse, covering various conceptions of God and religious images. Nonetheless, those identifying themselves as ‘modernists’ did have some features in common that distinguished them from other Protestants. Initially, in its ‘classic’ form that came to be known as ‘old-school modernism’ in the twentieth century, modernism was characterised by a historical-critical approach to the Bible, an anti-supernaturalist interpretation of Christianity, an image of Jesus as a paragon of virtue, an optimistic outlook on human nature, a firm belief in progress, the endeavour to let individuals develop personal conceptions of God in accordance with reason and their inner life, and the hope that mankind would one day share in a universal kind of non-dogmatic religiosity. Although liberal Protestant historians, most famously Johannes Lindeboom, have been keen to trace its roots all the way back to the Renaissance or, in an extreme case, even to Antiquity, modernism was essentially a product of both the rationalistic scholarly culture that came into being during the eighteenth-century Enlightenment and the subjectivism of early nineteenth-century Romanticism. It was ultimately ‘born’ at the theological faculty in the German town of Tübingen in the 1830s. As I have said, ‘modernism’ is an umbrella term including

2 Krijger, ‘De organisatorische spin in het vrijzinnige web’.

both modern theology, the development of which started in the Netherlands in the 1840s, and the modernist movement, which took shape as of the late 1850s. The latter tried to reconfigure church and social life on the basis of the non-supernatural, non-dogmatic interpretation of Christianity that modern theology advocated. Its rise resulted in a fierce orthodox backlash. To defend modernist interests against this counteroffensive of 'confessionalism', the NPB was founded in 1870. This association also intended to tighten the bonds among modernists from different denominations, and, as some of its supporters hoped, give shape to a new kind of faith community that would replace the institution of the church.

As noted in the introductory chapter, the NPB was an archetype of a new kind of association that emerged in the late nineteenth century: it was a national league of local branches, founded to gain the support of individuals with shared interests, or shared convictions, from all across the country in order to realise a particular goal. In the case of the NPB, this goal was to advance the free development of religious life in church and society. The NPB represented an 'imagined community', being based not on actual personal encounters, but rather on its members' feeling of personally being part of a group of like-minded people, of whom they only knew a few. In shaping this imagined community, the weekly *De Hervorming* was instrumental. Issued as the '*Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad*' between 1869 and 1872, this magazine was affiliated with the NPB from late 1875 until its disappearance in late 1934. In order to feel part of a community that primarily rests on the power of imagination, individuals need to have a shared frame of reference in which their sense of togetherness is rooted, and from which they can derive their identity. In other words, NPB members' capacity to experience and cultivate their bonds, their sociability, had to be fostered. This was exactly what *De Hervorming* did. It was modernists' collective weapon against a common enemy: confessionalism. The name '*De Hervorming*' in itself was intended to instil in modernists the feeling of having a shared past: it referred to the sixteenth-century Reformers, upon whom characteristics were projected in which modernists could recognise themselves. *De Hervorming* helped to build a modernist 'collective memory' and to shape modernist 'invented traditions', which it did in several ways. It contained articles in which Luther and Zwingli were commemorated as advocates of principles labelled 'modernist', in particular freedom of conscience, and in which a liberal Protestant spirit was discerned in pre-modern 'great minds', some of whom had not even been Christians. The magazine extensively reported on the annual meeting of modern theologians held in Amsterdam around Easter, and the general NPB assembly held in a different city each year around Reformation Day, thereby turning these events into mainstays and highlights

of modernist community life. Moreover, initiatives that helped provide modernists with their own 'material culture', such as modernist hymnbooks and a modernist translation of the Bible (the *Leidsche Vertaling*), often resulted from discussions started in *De Hervorming*. In sum, *De Hervorming* helped to construct a modernist 'cultural pattern', offering building blocks that each individual modernist could use in shaping an identity that was recognisable as 'modernist'.

The title of the magazine not only was a reference to a shared past; it also reminded modernists of a shared goal to pursue in the present: reshaping Christianity in such a way that it would be sustainable in the age to come, and permeating society with this 'modernised' Christianity – or to quote A. Bruining, bringing about "a second Reformation, not less far-reaching than that of the sixteenth century."³ In the columns of *De Hervorming*, a modernist could read that elsewhere in the Netherlands (and abroad) in past and present, others had been, or were currently, fighting for the same cause as he was. Through *De Hervorming*, all modernists shared in each other's vicissitudes. Finally, *De Hervorming* showed modernists that, notwithstanding their political, denominational, and theological differences, they had a shared future, symbolised by the NPB. Alongside reinforcing a sense of belonging, the magazine fostered among modernists a sense of urgency about giving shape to the abovementioned 'second Reformation'. Many initiatives for doing this accordingly stemmed from discussions held in *De Hervorming*, such as attempts to organise district nursing within the framework of the NPB (with the aim of enhancing the spiritual development of the sick poor) in the 1890s, the founding of the *Evangelische Unie* (seeking to advance doctrinal freedom within the Dutch Reformed Church) in 1896, and the endeavour to permeate political life with a modernist spirit (particularly intended to counteract a perceived religious indifference within the liberal parties) in the 1910s and 1920s. *De Hervorming* was hence not only a 'mirror' in which the development of the modernist movement was reflected; it was an important *agent* in this development as well.

Although the NPB thus helped to shape a 'typically modernist' cultural pattern, and could rightfully claim to be the central organisation within the modernist movement until well into the early twentieth century, its members were fewer than the total number of Dutchmen and Dutchwomen who self-identified as 'modernists'. In other words, the modernist movement and the imagined community that was the NPB did not coincide. Nonetheless, the NPB

3 A. Bruining, *De belangrijkste godsdiensten van onzen tijd. Leesboek voor catechisatiën* (Leiden 1884), 70.

is *the* point of departure for research that seeks to cover the full breadth of the Dutch modernist movement before the Second World War, namely in its capacity as the association that commissioned the publishing of *De Hervorming*. As implied in the concept of the 'discourse community', a movement with rather fluid boundaries like the modernist one can only be studied by looking at the channels of communication those who identified themselves as adherents of this movement made use of in order to express themselves. *De Hervorming* arguably was the main channel of communication in liberal Protestant circles, particularly after it was purchased by the NPB in 1875: because all (political, denominational, theological) nuances existing within the modernist movement were represented in the membership of the NPB, and all modernist opinion leaders were involved with the NPB in one way or another, the variety of opinions circulating within the modernist movement manifested themselves in the opinion magazine affiliated with the NPB. In fact, modernists had the opportunity to develop into opinion leaders in their own circles in the first place by expressing themselves in this periodical. After all, no other modernist magazine had as much reach and was as old as *De Hervorming*, due to which its prestige was unequalled. Ideas had potentially the most impact in the modernist movement when they were put forward in *De Hervorming*. Therefore, an integral and systematic discourse analysis of the content of this magazine is at the core of the research into the liberal Protestant press at large (and many other sources) upon which this study is based.

By approaching the modernist movement as a discourse community (and being the first to do so), this study advances the following twofold argument to explain the development of this movement, as sketched in Drijver's above-mentioned 1930 article. First, the modernist movement was, in practice, not as dedicated to reform as first-generation modernists' rhetoric suggested. Second, the modernist movement had an inherently bourgeois character, fostering a strong sense of class-consciousness and finding expression in a particular discourse, both of which features caused modernists to become out of step with what was going on in society at large.

3 Evaluating the History of the Modernist Movement

Due to the absence of doctrines and concrete conceptions of God with which they all could identify, first-generation modernists identified themselves in terms of what they were not and what they wanted to be. They contrasted themselves with orthodoxy, or, to be more precise, with their perception of what 'orthodoxy' was: supernaturalist, obscurantist, reactionary, hostile to

freedom of conscience, and imperious. They believed that they were the true Protestants, the true heirs to the Reformation – a vanguard that would reform church life and social life and as such heralded the future. The first-generation modernists' self-image was thus based on a negation of orthodoxy, and on the expectations these modernists had. When those expectations had still not come true after several decades, and a new generation of modernists, emerging as of the mid-1890s, began questioning the casualness with which modernism was contrasted with orthodoxy and blaming the earliest modernists for merely dismantling church life without actually building something new in its place, a severe identity crisis set in among modernists. In fact, the desirability of defining 'modernism' positively – that is, in terms of what it was rather than in terms of what it was not or what it wanted to be – was as old as the modernist movement itself. However, as long as all modernists could at least agree about being the exact opposite of orthodox Protestants and collectively believe that the future was theirs, it was not problematic for the modernist movement to lack a clear profile. From the mid-1890s onwards, it was precisely this consensus that disappeared. 'Mystical youngsters', 'malcontents', and 'right-wing modernists' felt that modernists so far had been too individualistic, too intellectualistic, and too unappreciative of the Christian tradition. Though not rejecting the term 'modernist' altogether, they tended to prefer the term '*vrijzinnig*', which lacked the negative connotations that '*modern*' had for them. Two other groups followed them in this: the *vrijzinnig-hervormden*, for whom '*modern*' connoted an indifferent or even antagonistic attitude in ecclesial matters, and the *algemeen-vrijzinnigen*, who hoped to erase existing factional lines. The increasing use of the term '*vrijzinnig*' in preference to the term '*modern*' seemed to promise new horizons for the modernist movement, but it actually signified something else. By using the term '*modern*' in reference to themselves less and less, modernists in the twentieth century gave up the expectations and pretensions for which this term stood. Instead of making them more earnest in the pursuit for a new religious vocabulary and a second Reformation, the crisis of identity and the corresponding need for more clarity about the essence of liberal Protestantism led modernists to fall back on 'orthodox' terminology and even on creed-like 'declarations of faith'.

In the 1860s, 1870s, and 1880s, voices criticising church life and the institution of the church prevailed in the modernist movement. The church was said to have had its day – it was rooted in a supernaturalist worldview and had become too detached from the rest of society, lagging behind the times. If Christianity was to preserve its social significance in the age to come, church life either had to be replaced by a differently shaped community of faith or purged of all elements that only made sense in a supernaturalist outlook on

life. Some hoped that the NPB would develop into the faith community of tomorrow, uniting all modernists and ultimately, when orthodoxy had 'died out', becoming the organisation in which Christianity would find its new institutional embodiment. However, not everyone in the NPB cherished this hope: in practice, most modernists wanted to use the NPB as an *addition* to church life, as a place of refuge for modernists who were chased out of their church congregations, and as a meeting place for modernists from different denominational backgrounds. These two opposing visions of what the NPB was and what it should be hindered the NPB from becoming an 'experimental garden'. In fact, many NPB branches gradually came to resemble church congregations, even offering their members baptismal services and the opportunity to celebrate the Lord's Supper. A more drastic attempt to shape a new kind of faith community was the founding of the Free Congregation in Amsterdam in 1877. Seceding from the local Dutch Reformed congregation, the Hugenholtz brothers and their sympathisers formed an independent community with the status of a voluntary association. They decided to abolish baptism, the Lord's Supper, several Christian holidays, and the institution of the deaconry, and to organise religious services in which the Bible was not the only source of edification. In practice, the Free Congregation was a 'church-lite', but nonetheless not a radically new alternative to church life. Its founding was not copied elsewhere in the Netherlands, leading to disappointment among those who felt that the institution of the church had run its course.

The outbreak of the so-called '*Doleantie*' in 1886, the Kuyperian exodus from the Dutch Reformed Church, gave these modernists a new gleam of hope that existing church life would finally fall apart, but the great majority of modernists were not willing to contribute to that. Church-minded voices now became dominant in the modernist movement. In liberal Reformed circles, a strong feeling emerged that modernists would have had a stronger position in the Dutch Reformed Church if dissatisfied modernist members of this denomination had neither joined the Remonstrant Brotherhood nor sought refuge in the NPB. The ideal of the *volkskerk* came to be stressed, which was not conducive to thorough church reform: for this ideal to be realised, the bonds with orthodoxy had to be maintained. In reaction to Reformed modernists' greater emphasis on their own denomination, and also due to a stronger self-awareness that stemmed from the (gradual or in some congregations massive) influx of Reformed modernists into their ranks, Remonstrants, Mennonites, and Lutherans came to focus more on their own denominations as well. This increased denominational consciousness, combined with malcontent criticism of the lack of community spirit in old-school modernism, led to a revaluation of the institution of the church and ecclesial practices, for which I have coined the

term 'ecclesial turn' in this book. That turn meant the deathblow to the quest for alternatives to church life and to the aspiration of the NPB to unite all modernists.

In reflecting upon their own identity and a reform of church life, modernists were not only confronted with orthodoxy. They also had to deal with the emergence of what were called 'little religions' and life reform movements, as well as with growing numbers of people leaving the churches and the spread of atheism. Some modernists were attracted to little religions such as Theosophy and Spiritism. They claimed that these faiths could give what modernism lacked, in particular certainty about the afterlife and a thorough integration of science and religion. Moreover, in the 1910s and 1920s, when a feeling of marginalisation had become manifest among modernists, some argued that the modernist movement should try to incorporate the little religions, in order for it to exert more influence on religious life outside of the churches and to speak with a louder voice in society. Yet, the attempt to develop a federation of groups organised around the concept of 'free religiosity' failed. In modernist circles, enthusiasm for a close alliance with the adherents of little religions was too limited. The feeling that occultist spirituality did not contribute to the free development of religious life proved to be too strong among modernists: the little religions were generally perceived as supernaturalist, doctrinal, materialistic, pseudoscientific, and hence inferior to liberal Protestantism. They should be kept at a distance instead of being more closely tied to the modernist movement. Moreover, due to the 'ecclesial turn' mentioned above, there was a strong tendency in the early twentieth-century modernist movement to equate religious life with church life. Manifestations of belief in a 'higher' reality, such as the little religions, occurring outside of church life were consequently treated as problematic. Rather than helping religious life to blossom in a non-church setting, the reinforcement of church life came to have priority in the modernist movement: people who had resigned their church membership or who never attended religious services should be led *back* to the churches. As such, the issue of church abandonment was not reflected upon deeply enough in modernist circles: after all, by implying that religious life needed an ecclesial embedding, the question of why a growing number of people left the churches in the first place basically came to be declared irrelevant. Because the institution of the church and ecclesial practices received more appreciation in modernist circles, even causing the NPB to become a church-like denomination, others' dissatisfaction with church life was not given due recognition.

As comes to the fore in my analysis of the discussions on ecclesial and religious matters mentioned above, and those on social issues dealt with below, there was a dominant discourse in modernist circles. I call it the 'discourse of

the spiritual aristocracy of tutors'. The discussion on lay preaching, which was part of the larger debate on church reform, and the discussion on district nursing, one element of the debate on social reform, help illustrate what I mean. It is often claimed that the distinction between 'clergymen' and 'laypeople' became irrelevant in the modernist movement. However, this distinction did indeed continue to exist. Pleas to grant laypeople the right to lead religious services had a limited effect. Modernists agreed that for a sermon to be truly edifying, the person who preaches should have ideas about God that are concordant with contemporary science and scholarship, activate free piety, and show a strong moral sense. Having completed theological study and having received ordination were seen as safeguards that someone had these capacities and qualities, that someone was spiritually developed enough, to be an example to his audience.

As with every form of social work, district nursing should help the poor and needy to struggle out of their misery. Modernists generally believed that the roots of social wrongs were of a spiritual nature: these wrongs stemmed from a lack of the necessary capacities for self-improvement and self-sustainment in those suffering from social misery, as well as from a poorly developed sense of duty and of a lack of qualms of conscience in those who were in a position to lend support to the former. The solutions to social wrongs were accordingly of a spiritual nature as well: material relief could only be realised through spiritual development. In modernist thinking, an implicit link was made between a low level of spiritual development and a low position on the social ladder. The key to increasing one's level of spiritual development was bringing such individuals into contact with someone who was spiritually more developed, hence with someone from a higher social class. In the contact between the two, it was expected that the former would gradually appropriate the attitude of mind of the latter. Social work organised on the basis of this principle, including district nursing, was called '*toynbeewerk*' and was favoured in modernist circles because of its presumed twofold effect. It would help the poor and needy to gain insight into the causes of their misery, to develop a stronger moral sense, and – due to the link made in modernist thinking between intellectual development, piety, and morality – to instil in them a spirit of 'free piety'. Furthermore, *toynbeewerk* increased social awareness among bourgeois individuals, as it encouraged the latter to assume *individual* responsibility for the commonweal and, by confronting them directly with social misery, led them to acknowledge the intolerability of social wrongs.

In sum, activities in both church life and social life ought to contribute to character building, by helping individuals to take in hand their self-realisation in an intellectual, religious, and moral sense. This did not mean that individu-

als were mere 'atoms'; spiritual development implied knowing and being able to fulfil one's duties to community. Through contact with the spiritually most developed individuals, 'spiritual aristocrats', whom they could take as an example (who could act as their 'tutors'), spiritually less developed individuals were enabled to pursue self-realisation. In the case of lay preaching, access to the pulpit remained the prerogative of ministers, who were, so to speak, 'spiritual aristocrats' by profession and hence the most fit to address a congregation. In the case of district nursing, women in particular could fulfil the role of spiritual 'tutors', because this form of social work required qualities that were believed to be intrinsic to female nature. Yet, in both cases, *modernists* could best fulfil the role of a 'spiritual aristocracy of tutors': intellectually and hence religiously and hence morally, they were, in their own perception, spiritually the most developed.

As expressed in modernist discourse, the way to permeate society with a liberal Protestant spirit was through *personal* contact between a 'spiritual aristocrat' and a spiritually less developed individual. It was expected that the 'good' influence of the former would in due course not leave the latter unaffected. Centralising welfare work within the framework of the national NPB was therefore controversial. It was feared that such work would then be easily deprived of its individual character and would simply become a matter of propaganda for modernism instead of an altruistic act of humanity helping the less fortunate. Moreover, organising welfare work collectively might not only discourage NPB members from taking *individual* responsibility for social reform; it would also make the entire membership of the NPB morally responsible for specific *forms* of welfare work, including those members who did not agree with the chosen forms. Out of fear that the NPB might otherwise disintegrate, it was decided after much debate in the late nineteenth century that modernists should only continue to be *encouraged* to engage in welfare work; it was up to every NPB member individually to decide how he wanted to contribute to the commonweal. The call of some modernists to shift the focus of the NPB from church life to social life was thereby ignored. These modernists believed that without such a shift of focus, the modernist movement would never be able to get a foothold in the working classes, on which the emerging socialist labour movement was exerting a growing attraction.

In this labour movement, which contradicted modernist discourse by proclaiming that structural reforms in society should precede individual reform, and hence that bourgeois society needed to disappear, an unfavourable outlook on religion in general and modernism in particular prevailed. Its first leader – who might, due to the almost religious awe that he inspired in his working-class sympathisers, better be called a 'messiah' – was a former

modernist minister: F. Domela Nieuwenhuis. One of the reasons for him to resign the ministry, and even to renounce his faith altogether, in 1879, was the lack of urgency about reforming society that he perceived in modernist circles. Domela depicted the modernist movement as half-hearted, wallowing in moral superiority, self-satisfied – as inherently bourgeois and thus as inimical to socialism. Later socialist leaders did not try to correct this image of modernists that he firmly embedded in the labour movement. In the modernist movement, in turn, socialism initially got a bad press: it was generally seen as vulgar, materialistic, and an attack on individual freedom. The idea of being politically liberal ‘by nature’ was deep-rooted in modernists’ self-perception; liberal politics came closest to modernist discourse. Yet, in the late 1880s, articles began to appear in the modernist press in which socialism received a positive connotation, first in a general ‘cultural’ sense, as a restraint on unbridled individual-centredness, later also in a more political sense. Some modernist ministers even became engaged in socialist politics, either within or outside the SDAP, the largest socialist party in the Netherlands, as of the mid-1890s. Confronted with the side effects of liberal-capitalist economics in the municipalities that they inhabited, they looked beyond socialist leaders’ anti-religious, inflammatory rhetoric, and believed that the labour movement and the modernist movement belonged together: in essence, both wanted to liberate the individual from the chains by which he was bound. Nonetheless, the numbers of such modernists remained small; a political preference for liberalism continued to prevail among modernists. Moreover, socialist modernist ministers did not succeed in giving the modernist movement more appeal among the working classes. On the contrary, instead of leading labourers into the modernist movement, the ‘red ministers’ became a separate faction within both socialism and the modernist movement.

The modernist movement not only failed to make headway among the working classes. As early as the 1860s, leading Dutch men of letters and publicists, who had looked favourably upon or had even actively participated in the modernist movement during the very beginning of its formative phase, severely criticised modernists for their inability to make their religious ideas less vague, their half-hearted attempts to harmonise biblical narratives with contemporary scientific and scholarly insights, and their failure to live up to their own expectations. Just as former modernist minister Domela Nieuwenhuis, due to whom an unfavourable outlook on the modernist movement firmly took root in the socialist movement, Pierson and Busken Huet, who identified as modernists before resigning as ministers in the mid-1860s, fostered a negative image of the modernist movement in the literary circles they entered after stepping down from the pulpit. Their influence should not

be underestimated: being former modernists themselves, their negative opinion of the modernist movement was accorded a great deal of authority. In addition, modernist discourse *widened* the gap between the modernist movement and intellectual life. In the modernist movement, literature was generally only appreciated if it contributed to spiritual development. The criteria on which modernists ultimately determined the value of a written work were the intentions of its author and the protagonists it presented: it should bear the marks of what modernists regarded as reasonable, pious, and decent. In modernist eyes, the author and the protagonists of a novel should be, but often failed to be, 'spiritual aristocrats'. Truth, ethics, and aesthetics were inextricably interwoven in modernist thinking. Trends in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century literature and art that accentuated one of these elements at the expense of the other two, or that utterly neglected one or all of these elements, such as naturalism, the notion of *l'art pour l'art* that came into vogue, aestheticism, a growing interest in occultism, nihilism, escapism, and fatalism, were therefore observed with concern in the modernist movement. Among modernists, a frame of mind continued to be dominant that did not allow for literature to be appreciated other than through the eyes of a minister. Not surprisingly, most modernist literary critics were ministers. A novel was not a sermon, but it should essentially have the same effect as a sermon: it should be edifying. It was exactly this moralism, as well as the moral hypocrisy, tenuity, parochialism, and class structure that they regarded as characteristic of bourgeois society, against which belletrists protested. The norms, values, and ideals upheld in the modernist movement, as pre-eminently reflected in modernists' literary criticism, were those of the bourgeois world that was rejected in literary circles.

Although the eagerness with which they made themselves heard in the early twentieth century might suggest the opposite, modernists with politically socialist leanings remained a rather small minority. Yet, also among those modernists who continued to support liberal politics, dissatisfaction with political liberalism increased. They blamed liberal politicians for neglecting religion as a cause for concern in social life due to an interpretation of the term 'neutrality' that was, in their view, basically tantamount to religious indifference. In doing so, liberal politicians played into the hands of Roman Catholics and orthodox Protestants: they gave the latter reason to claim that liberalism aspired to a society in which religion was irrelevant, and as such gave them an incentive to go on the offensive. Roman Catholics and orthodox Protestants organised themselves separately in all spheres of life, and managed to increase their influence in society. Political liberals just stood there and watched, while confessionals' expansion of power was at the expense of the

free development of religious life that the modernists who loyally supported liberal politics pursued. Initiatives were therefore taken to propagate liberal Protestant interests and principles more actively in political life in general and liberal political parties in particular. Similar initiatives were taken in social life. Fuelled by the rise of malcontentism, due to which the Christian roots of the modernist movement came to be accentuated, discontent with the 'general', non-Christian, or not explicitly Christian associations that they had supported so far grew among modernists. The notion of neutrality on which those associations were based was interpreted in the same way as in political liberalism. While Roman Catholics and orthodox Protestants were able to spread their principles in society through organisations of their own, modernists had contented themselves with organisations in which, as was argued in a growing number of opinion articles, their principles – whatever these might be – could not be done full justice. Accordingly, initiatives such as the founding of a secondary school, an association in aid of neglected children, youth organisations, and a radio broadcasting corporation exclusively affiliated with the modernist movement were launched.

Not all of these initiatives had the same degree of success. Separate political organisations of modernists, and calls to only vote for liberal candidates who explicitly identified as modernists, did not arouse much enthusiasm: the feeling prevailed that they blended religion and politics in the same way as confessionism did, by turning shared theological views into the prime motive behind political behaviour. The founding of a modernist high school in The Hague was not followed elsewhere in the Netherlands: the ideal of one public school for all Dutch children, regardless of their religious backgrounds, was too strong in modernist circles, while schools of their own would deprive modernists of the possibility of instilling non-modernist children with a liberal Protestant spirit. The Association for the Support of the Uncared-For and Fallen Women failed to make clear which consequences its liberal Protestant basis should have in practice, as a result of which it received less support than it had hoped for. On the other hand, separate youth organisations immediately attained a firm foothold: they were welcomed as a means to prepare new generations of modernists for the ongoing spiritual battle with confessionism and materialism, and to breathe new life into the modernist movement. The same was true of the VPRO: modernists, including the initiators and leaders of the VPRO, generally favoured a national broadcasting association in which all religious groups in the Netherlands would have a say, but as long as such an association did not come into being – the claim of the AVRO to be truly 'national' was rejected –, they had to maintain a broadcasting association of their own in order not to be silenced on the radio. All of these initiatives were taken in

reaction to, and even in imitation of, orthodoxy: although the compartmentalisation of society along ideological lines after which confessionalists aspired was not a modernist ideal, the figures behind these initiatives felt that modernists had no other choice but to follow orthodoxy's example, and to go along with the process of pillarisation in order to be heard.

As I have said, one of the aims of the modernist movement was to permeate society with a modernised Christianity. Different answers were given to the question of how this aim should and could best be achieved. In addition, the question of whether this aim should go beyond the borders of the Netherlands, or, to be more specific, whether the modernist movement had a task in disseminating liberal Protestant principles in non-Christian cultures, hence in conducting foreign missions, was regularly raised. From its emergence onwards, Christianity had been a missionary religion, inciting its adherents to spread the Gospel message all across the world in the hope that others would accept Jesus as their Redeemer. Yet, the image of Jesus as saviour of souls was rejected in modernist circles. Did it then still make sense for modernists to engage in foreign missions? Moreover, the modernist movement aspired to a *free* development of religious life. Would introducing liberal Protestantism to 'pagans' not be an extraneous interference in the free development of their religious life? In the modernist press and in several brochures, a minority zealously maintained that modernists were called to concern themselves with foreign missions. These modernists argued that religious life in 'pagan' cultures could never freely develop so long as 'pagans' were bound in the chains of superstition and savagery. According to them, only modernists could bring spiritual liberation: while Roman Catholic and orthodox Protestant missionaries merely tried to replace the bonds of superstition and savagery with other bonds, namely those of dogmatism and ritualism, modernists wanted to help individuals in becoming autonomous, self-conscious beings, to assist individuals in attaining a higher level of spiritual development. Everything came down to the personality of the missionary: as a missionary needed to be a 'spiritual aristocrat' in order for his contact with 'pagans' to result in a *true* and *total* – intellectual, religious, *and* moral – improvement in the latter's lot, he should of necessity be a modernist. Pro-mission modernists simply carried further the discourse of the spiritual aristocracy of tutors and applied it to the non-Christian world. Equating Christianity with civilisation, as was common at the time, they emphasised that modernists had a moral duty to help 'pagans' climb the ladder of civilisation by 'Christianising' their cultures. Moreover, pro-mission modernists thought that involvement in foreign missions would have a positive effect on the development of the modernist movement itself as well, as missionary activities would force modernists to phrase

their religious beliefs in less 'vague' terms, and were also necessary to prevent 'pagans' from becoming bound in Catholic and orthodox Protestant chains.

Their pleas failed to excite much enthusiasm among modernists, notwithstanding a latent belief in the modernist movement that the free development of religious life would ultimately lead to a universal religion, and that this universal religion could only be based on liberal Protestant principles. It might be expected that modernists would be eager to support activities intended to spread their principles in non-Christian cultures also, but most of them showed a lack of interest in foreign missions. This had to do with the fact that the discussion on foreign missions mostly had to do with modernists' involvement in the *Nederlandsch Zendeling-Genootschap*. In the modernist movement, there were two major objections against this missionary society. First, in the NZG, a 'traditional', orthodox view on missions, focused on making converts, prevailed. Second, the NZG was mainly active in the Dutch East Indies, an area in which indigenous religious life had not yet developed far enough to have produced elements with which modernists could link up. Most modernists apparently considered foreign missions in this area to be too much of an infringement on the free development of religious life, feeling both that the religious life of 'pagans' should develop on its own, and that the longing for principles similar to those of liberal Protestantism should emerge within 'pagans' themselves. The lack of interest in foreign missions reflects the lack of militancy in the modernist movement in general.

Through the NPB, the Dutch modernist movement maintained contact with liberal Protestant groups outside of the Netherlands, some of which were, just like the NPB itself, modelled on the German *Protestantenverein*. These groups sent representatives to each other's annual meetings, a practice that came to be replaced by the international conferences held from 1901 onwards, and were kept informed about each other's ups and downs in the opinion magazines affiliated to them. With the exception of the years coinciding with and immediately following the First World War, when international relations were strained, these groups showed that they felt part of a transnational movement with a shared goal: the eradication of all impediments to a free development of religious life. They formalised their ties by establishing a permanent organisation, the IARF, in 1930, the headquarters of which were located in the Dutch town of Utrecht. The contexts in which other liberal Protestants groups were embedded differed, often significantly, from the Dutch one. The extent to which governments interfered in church life, to which societies were institutionally compartmentalised along religious, ethnic, cultural, and political lines, and to which liberal Protestants themselves were organised, varied from country to country.

Notwithstanding the particularities of each national context, the development of liberal Protestant groups outside of the Netherlands resembles that of the Dutch modernist movement in general terms, at least until 1940. Everywhere, the emergence of liberal Protestant groups was accompanied by high expectations regarding the appeal and reformist power of liberal Protestantism. Yet nowhere did these expectations come true: liberal Protestantism did not become mainstream in church and society, and turned out not to be a major source of reform, causing liberal Protestant groups to reconsider their identity and goals – which resulted, among other things, in calls for ‘declarations of faith’ to make liberal Protestantism ideologically less vague, and in a less depreciatory outlook on orthodoxy, and practices associated with orthodoxy, in the early twentieth century. They also became permeated with a spirit of disappointment, frustration, or even defeatism. Elsewhere, liberal Protestant groups continued to rely on the bourgeois classes for support just as heavily as in the Netherlands: they failed to get a firm foothold on the lower classes, a state of affairs that the presence of political socialists in all of them could not alter, nor did they manage to exert a lasting influence on intellectual and cultural life. Everywhere, the history of liberal Protestantism has been a story of a lack of appeal outside of the bourgeoisie and a story of gradual marginalisation. This supports my thesis that the Dutch modernist movement lost a good deal of its significance first and foremost due to intrinsic reasons rather than external causes.

4 The Modernist Paradox

As becomes clear from the analysis above, the history of the modernist movement reads as a paradox. The modernist movement wanted to make sure that Christianity kept up with the times and to permeate society with the spirit of a Christianity stripped of outmoded points of view, in order to prevent Christianity and culture from drifting further and further apart – or, to put it in a word, it tried to relate Christianity to the processes labelled as ‘modernisation’ in the introductory chapter –, but it actually struggled with modernisation. Modernists believed that the future was theirs – after all, contrary to Roman Catholics and orthodox Protestants, whom they regarded as the upholders of an archaic Christianity that would in due course no longer prove tenable, they were the ones pursuing a synthesis of Christianity and modern times. Yet, as time went on, it turned out that the modernist movement had already experienced its heyday during its formative phase in the 1860s and had been going downhill ever since. By contrast, Roman Catholic and orthodox Protestant in-

fluence in religious, social, and political life had become remarkably greater from the late 1860s onwards. Paradoxically, the self-proclaimed heralds of a modernised Christianity became marginalised in a modernising society. Why was that so?

As I see it, the modernist movement struggled with ‘modernisation’ precisely because of first-generation modernists’ expectation that the future was theirs. They were convinced that liberal Christianity would sooner or later become the new mainstream, both in church and society, as they believed it was the only outlook on life fit for modern man. Supernaturalist, doctrinal, tradition-bound Christianity would eventually meet defeat or even ‘die out’, so they expected, as it only made sense in a worldview that modern science and scholarship had disproved, and within a social order based on collectivism instead of individualism. To modernist eyes, Roman Catholicism and orthodox Protestantism revolved around the ideal of having everyone adhere to the same creeds; they did not grant individuals the freedom to develop personal conceptions of God. Modernists likewise generally considered the little religions as too eccentric and supernaturalistic to be taken very seriously. Moreover, they thought that freethinking and atheism would never gain much appeal and should accordingly not be accorded too much significance, since man was believed to have an innate yearning for communion with God. Liberal Christianity, on the other hand, satisfied both the mind and the heart: it did not conflict with reason and stimulated individuals to develop conceptions of God in accordance with their inner lives.

First-generation modernists thus firmly believed that the world surrounding them would ultimately adapt to them. Therefore, the modernist movement essentially aimed at turning others into modernists – not in the sense that others should develop conceptions of God based on modern theology, but rather in the sense that others should be helped to internalise the same values, principles and ideals as modernists.⁴ The discourse of the spiritual aristocracy of tutors clearly shows this. Individuals with a high level of spiritual development, i.e. those individuals whose intellect, piety, and moral sense made them stand out, had the moral duty to assist spiritually less developed individuals in reaching a higher level of spiritual development. In practice, this discourse had two implications.

First, modernists saw reason, piety, and morality as closely connected. They considered their own interpretation of Christianity to be in line with con-

4 Recognising this in retrospect, the liberal Reformed theologian Heije Faber (1907–2001) even states that “paternalism is ingrained in modernism.” Quoted from: H. Faber, *Rekenschap van een zoektocht. Een autobiografie* (Baarn 1993), 199.

temporary science and scholarship, and hence as the most reasonable. They believed that their 'reasonable' understanding of Christianity was closest to the true meaning of Jesus's words and deeds, and that they therefore had the best understanding of what *true* piety entailed. Furthermore, they maintained that a correct interpretation of what 'morality' is depended on a correct understanding of what 'piety' is. As a result, modernist discourse implied that modernists themselves were the 'spiritual aristocrats' *par excellence*.

Second, a high level of spiritual development was least likely to be found among lower-class individuals. After all, the latter lacked the time and material resources to 'improve' themselves in an intellectual, religious, and moral sense. Modernist discourse thus implied that spiritual development had a class component to it. Of necessity, a 'spiritual aristocrat' was a modernist and belonged to the higher strata of society – two characteristics that in large part overlapped: while not all middle- or higher middle-class individuals identified as modernists by any means, the modernist movement did nonetheless receive most of its support from bourgeois circles. Modernist values, behaviours, and ideals were consequently those of the bourgeoisie. Class-consciousness was intrinsic to liberal Protestantism, not only in the Dutch context; as Harris argues, for example, there has historically been a strong tendency among American Unitarians to believe that others first have to become like them in order to fit into their congregations.⁵

The discourse they used caused modernists to become more and more out of step with the world surrounding them, as the values, behaviours, and ideals that they considered as normative came to be severely challenged. Contrary to first-generation modernists' expectations, the world did not adapt to them. Roman Catholics and orthodox Protestants did not patiently try to help others in becoming like themselves; they wanted to mould social life to what they regarded as God's will. In order to do so, they organised themselves as mass movements, converting numerical strength into power and influence. The labour movement equally tried to mobilise the masses. Socialist leaders emphasised that individual reform was not a prerequisite for social reform, but rather that individuals would never attain self-realisation without structural changes in the fabric of the social and economic order. Denouncing bourgeois society, they instilled in the working classes a sense of self-worth: the latter were victims of their environment, who did not need to be taught how to behave, or to appropriate the same values as the classes above them, but rather had to throw off the bourgeois yoke. Roman Catholics, orthodox Protestants, and socialists did not pursue social reform by encouraging others to adapt to them-

⁵ Harris, *Elite*, 27, 29, 112.

selves, but rather the opposite: they attempted to restructure and reorganise society and *by so doing* instil others with their values and beliefs. Roman Catholics and orthodox Protestants built organisations of their own, which were supposed to engraft their principles onto social life. Socialists hoped to build a socialist society, either through revolution or through parliament, to which, once established, everyone would have no other choice but to accommodate. The modernist attitude was less militant. The mass culture that these groups brought into being was diametrically opposed to what was expressed in modernist discourse, as a result of which the latter had little appeal. Modernists were socially committed, more so than often acknowledged, but in a way that less and less corresponded to social reality.

Modernist discourse not only prevented the modernist movement from being the popular movement it wanted to be, as this discourse was based on a view of society that became more and more remote from reality due to the emerging mass culture. As explained above, it also caused the modernist movement to become increasingly estranged from intellectual life.

Modernist discourse was thus discordant with the direction in which Dutch society (and society in Northern and Western Europe and North America in general) was developing, causing the modernist movement to lack appeal. Accordingly, the suggestion that the modernist movement would have been able to play a more influential role in church life and society if it had been more tightly organised is questionable at the very least. In fact, modernist discourse not only hindered the modernist movement from becoming better organised in the first place, as it was based on the notion of individual reform through personal contact instead of on the notion of structural reform through collective action; it also caused modernists' commitment to the modernist-based organisations that did come into being to be less intense than Roman Catholics' and neo-Calvinists' commitment to organisations based on their respective principles. In spite of claims that 'laypeople' had by no means a subordinate position, ministers and theologians continued to be just as dominant in the modernist movement as they were in Roman Catholic and orthodox Protestant circles. They were the opinion leaders and the ones who took the lead in creating initiatives to put religious principles into practice. However, when it comes to the involvement of 'laypeople' with these initiatives, the modernist movement on the one hand and the Roman Catholic and orthodox Protestant 'pillars' on the other hand present a different picture. The whole process of pillarisation completely depended on laypeople's commitment. Laypeople were eager to demonstrate this commitment, for a strong involvement in parochial or congregational life, and an active participation in pillarised organisational life, were regarded as signs of true devoutness, evincing one's 'regenerated'

state. Social pressure contributed to this as well: one who showed a lack of commitment was quickly stigmatised as being a 'bad' Christian. Modernist discourse had the opposite effect. As explained in chapter 6, ministers and theologians were regarded in the modernist movement as the obvious individuals to hold leading positions in the sphere of religion. This sphere not only included church life, but *all* activities intended to disseminate religious principles. The idea that ministers and theologians were best-fitted to lead in the sphere of religion fostered passivity: it gave laypeople an incentive to think that such activities could best be left completely to them. Accordingly, the initiators and leaders of organisations based on modernist principles – who were, without exception, ministers and theologians – continuously complained about a lack of lay interest.

This is not to say that the organisations and activities created to permeate society with a liberal Protestant spirit lacked *support* in the form of either members or expressions of sympathy. Yet, feelings of sympathy do not necessarily result in active involvement. Liberal political parties, which could count on massive support in modernist circles, experienced this as well: the urge to actively participate in party political life seems to have been lower among their supporters (those who voted for them) than among the supporters of the political parties that were part of a genuine 'pillar'. Complaints about a lack of involvement of the liberal electorate could regularly be heard in the circle of liberal party executives and in the liberal press, intensifying in the early twentieth century, when the pillarisation of Dutch society reached its apogee. In 1910, for instance, an anonymous editor of the liberal newspaper *De Graafschap-bode* (*Graafschap Messenger*), who had "repeatedly warned against the tepidity and indifference that has come to characterise a large part of the Dutch liberal citizenry and that paralyses the strength of the entire liberal party [the *Liberale Unie*, the *Bond van Vrije Liberalen* and the *Vrijzinnig-Democratische Bond*, ТК]," accused liberal voters of making the "mistake" of showing no political commitment:

Many keep aloof from public affairs, are not involved in politics, let things slide – people who could exert a tremendous influence on the course of events [in society] if they would bother to devote some of their time and energy [to politics]. That is why liberal party executives often have a lot of difficulty in finding good candidates for the seats that are at stake during elections.⁶

6 'Binnenland – Waarom zijn wij zoo lauw!', *De Graafschap-bode* (1 October 1910), 6.

Whilst making propaganda for the *Vrijheidsbond* in Amsterdam, the jurist C.H. Guépin (1874-1935) and the notary A.G. Lubbers (1886-1958) noticed twenty-one years later that liberal parties were still confronted with an electorate that was generally uninvolved with politics; more so than other parties.⁷ In 1937, to mention a final example, an editorial in the liberal *Middelburgsche Courant* (*Middelburg Newspaper*) appeared in which “the liberal part of the electorate,” i.e. the voters for the *Vrijheidsbond*, were blamed for their

lukewarmness that defies all description. With the exception of a few good ones, a willingness to contribute to party activities and to furnish the party with funds is almost completely absent [among liberal voters]. The party itself has [. . .] not managed to arouse interest and enthusiasm, nor drive its lukewarm supporters to active involvement – which, given the threat of going to ruin, has become necessary in present-day society!⁸

G.Ch. Quarles van Ufford (1865-1952), who represented the *Vrijheidsbond* in the council of the municipality of Bloemendaal at the time, found an explanation for this lack of political commitment in 1938 in the authority that liberal voters attributed to their representatives. “Our members,” he noticed, “regard us as some kind of managers, in whom they have an implicit faith. They do not attend party meetings and tell us when asked [about their lack of involvement]: ‘I trust you anyway, do as you please, I vote liberal in any case.’”⁹ In the liberal electorate, an attitude prevailed that was similar to the prevailing attitude in the modernist movement: politics could best be left to politicians, just as the dissemination of religious principles could best be left to ministers and theologians. This attitude was defensible when the bourgeoisie still set the tone in society, when the bourgeoisie could still expect that its values and ideas were the same as those of the men in leading positions. This attitude could contrarisewise only lead to marginalisation, as the editor of the *Middelburgsche Courant* rightfully accentuated, in a society developing towards institutional-

7 ‘De aanstaande verkiezingen – Een druk bezochte bijeenkomst van den Vrijheidsbond’, *Algemeen Handelsblad* CIV.33827 (21 April 1931), morning paper, 6; ‘Verkiezingsactie Vrijheidsbond’, *Ibid.* CIV.33882 (16 June 1931), evening paper, 6.

8 ‘Ten ondergang gedoemd?’, *Provinciale Zeeuwsche Middelburgsche Courant* CLXXX.130 (5 June 1937), 1.

9 [G.Ch. Quarles van Ufford in:] *Notulenboeken van de afdeling Bloemendaal van de Bond van Vrije Liberalen, voortgezet als Kiesvereniging “Bloemendaal”, afdeling van de Liberale Staatspartij “De Vrijheidsbond”, bevattende verslagen van bestuurs- en ledemvergaderingen alsmede van de afdeling, 1918-1946*, meeting of 14 March 1938, NL-HaNA, VVD, 2.19.022, inv.nr. 1111.

ised religious, political, and social pluralism, a society in which citizens could exert the most influence when they were *actively involved* in mass organisations.¹⁰

The history of the modernist movement paralleled that of political liberalism in the Netherlands not only in this respect.¹¹ Just like modernism, political liberalism was imbued with class-consciousness, taking bourgeois interests, ideas, and ethics as normative. And, just as the modernist movement, liberal political parties were therefore incapable of adequately responding to developments that challenged bourgeois culture, a culture in which individual development was central, a doctrinal approach to religion was rejected, and national unity was aspired to. Political liberalism was unable to overcome its class prejudice when Roman Catholics, orthodox Protestants, and socialists mobilised the masses.¹² “The advance of these groups,” as Vonhoff writes in his 1965 sketch of the ‘decent bourgeois gentlemen’, a phrase with which he referred to early twentieth-century political liberals,

[has] forced liberals onto the defensive. The principal characteristic of pre-World War II liberalism is, in my opinion, therefore a rather firm defensive attitude. Such a situation almost inevitably leads to rigidity. After all, only the conservative, the die-hard, feels that he still has something to hold on to. It is moreover understandable that, in such circumstances, one's politics are influenced or even determined by what others do. [. . .] [In early twentieth-century liberalism,] few reflections can be found that truly contain a vision for the future.¹³

Liberals favoured a configuration of society, a society in which the liberal-minded bourgeoisie set the tone, that more and more fell out of line with what was actually going on in society. They did not know how to deal with

10 In line with this, Noordhoff acutely noted in 1937 that modernists did not have to worry about their position in society and their chances of reaching individuals with their values and ideas “as long as liberal Protestantism was supported by a widespread liberal attitude of mind in our country.” Quoted from: Noordhoff, *Vrijzinnig protestantisme en onkerkelijkheid*, 17. Bratt, contrasting modernism with Kuyparian orthodoxy, similarly remarks that “modernists [. . .] needed the protection of elite rule.” Quoted from: J.D. Bratt, *Abraham Kuypers. Modern Calvinist, Christian Democrat* (Grand Rapids and Cambridge 2013), 51.

11 Cf.: Van Schie, *Vrijheidsstreven in verdrukking*.

12 De Rooy, ‘Voorbij de verzuiling?’, 54.

13 H.J.L. Vonhoff, *De zindelijke burgerheren. Een halve eeuw liberalisme* (Baarn 1965), 10.

the emerging mass culture.¹⁴ As a result, as Vonhoff implies, they became a rearguard, being forced to follow rather than to lead.

The same was true of the modernist movement. Instead of anticipating a church life and a society in which modernist principles of life would be those of the majority, by attempting to instil others with a liberal Protestant spirit (as the first generation of modernists had done), later generations of modernists were forced to *react* to developments in church life and society. The initial expectation that the modernist movement would have an irresistible appeal and would set in motion a second Reformation had not come true, leading to a feeling of disappointment and marginalisation among modernists towards the end of the nineteenth century. The circumstances had not adapted to modernists, hence modernists had to adapt to the circumstances. As a matter of course, the modernist movement shifted its aim from thoroughly reforming church and social life to preventing itself from being marginalised even further.¹⁵ In other words, the awareness that modernism was not becoming the dominant force in church life and society, as the earliest modernists had expected, curbed modernists' reform-mindedness.

It is against this background that the direction in which the modernist movement developed in the early twentieth century needs to be interpreted. The term '*vrijzinnig*' came to be preferred over '*modern*', because of increasing uneasiness with the triumphalism and unfulfilled reformist pretensions associated with the latter term, and because '*vrijzinnig*' could include both modernists and moderate orthodoxy, giving modernists the hope of expanding their sphere of influence. In liberal Reformed circles, the ideal of the *volkskerk* came to be accentuated, fuelled by the idea that the Dutch Reformed Church was modernists' only gateway to the masses and that, due to its theologically diverse character, it offered modernists the only opportunity to exert

14 To liberals' growing frustration. Consider, for example, the following crass remark published in an editorial in the liberal *Provinciale Groninger Courant* in 1935: "We want to say again that the leaders of the *Vrijheidsbond* are utterly unfit for the tasks they should fulfil in an organisational and propagandist sense at this juncture; that the party leadership consists of too many 'high-class gentlemen' and that it is too big and therefore too inflexible; that the *Vrijheidsbond* does not understand the art of raising and effectively using electoral slogans that mobilise perhaps not 'the', but at least 'a' crowd, while slogans are there for the taking, particularly in the liberal ideology." Yet the only remedy mentioned in this editorial was a reorganisation of the *Vrijheidsbond* – thus, the intrinsic lack of appeal of political liberalism was not fully recognised. Quoted from: 'De pers – Liberale zelfcritiek', *Algemeen Handelsblad* CVIII.35278 (25 April 1935), morning paper, 7.

15 Cf.: L.J. van Holk, 'Strijd om waarheid; vrede in vrijheid', in: J. de Graaf, L.J. van Holk and J.M. van Veen (eds.), *Vrijzinnige levensontplooiing. Drie opstellen over verleden en toekomst van het vrijzinnig christendom* (Baarn [1980]), 36–62, here 52.

influence on orthodoxy. Staying in the Dutch Reformed Church and finding a *modus vivendi* with orthodoxy accordingly became more important than striving for a new kind of community of faith. Those modernists who championed the idea of a federation of 'free religious' associations did so to increase the visibility and influence of the modernist movement in society. Those who urged the modernist movement to concern itself with social work believed that through such work, modernists could reach individuals whom they had failed to reach so far. Modernists who associated themselves with the socialist labour movement urged their co-religionists to do the same, arguing that the modernist movement would otherwise miss the boat. They were convinced that society was developing in a socialist direction and that the future of the modernist movement was hence a socialist one. The editorial reform of *De Hervorming* effectuated in 1918 was motivated by the desire to enable the modernist movement to exert a stronger influence on 'intellectuals', who controlled public opinion. Calls for separate modernist-based organisations in civil society stemmed from the feeling that modernists had no other choice but to go along with the process of pillarisation, to make themselves better heard in social life and to make sure that they would not be overlooked completely. Finally, modernist advocates of foreign missions came to stress around 1900 that involvement with foreign missions would breathe new life into the modernist movement, and was necessary to prevent Roman Catholicism and Protestant orthodoxy from becoming just as powerful in the Dutch East Indies as they were in the Netherlands.

Modernist rhetoric in the early twentieth century suggests that the modernist movement acted on the offensive: after all, the guiding thought in all the above examples was formulated in terms of an expansion of modernists' influence and visibility in church and society. Yet, the motivation to strive for such an expansion was actually purely *defensive*: while it had been first-generation modernists' *Leitmotiv* to 'conquer' the world, their spiritual heirs wanted to become more influential due to a feeling of marginalisation and the fear that liberal Protestantism would otherwise lose its significance altogether. The latter had to reconcile themselves to the situation with which they were confronted, in order to continue to play a role in church and social life. All in all, the modernist movement clearly did not *set* the trends; it was *overtaken* by developments.

5 A Final Word

This book has put forward a new approach to organised liberal Protestantism in the Netherlands, delineating it as an interdenominational, partly

nondenominational discourse community centred around the Dutch League of Protestants, interrelating its vicissitudes in religious, social, and political life over a period of several decades, and comparing its history to that of liberal Protestantism in other countries. The result thereof is a new interpretation that refines and corrects existing ideas on the development of Dutch liberal Protestantism after its quick rise during its formative phase in the late 1850s and 1860s. Does this mean that there is nothing left to say about its history? Obviously, there is, as a study on liberal Protestantism in the Netherlands after 1940, having a similar broad scope as this one, has yet to be written. But even with regard to pre-World War II liberal Protestantism there are still themes to be explored. In fact, an analysis of these themes is called for by, and can build upon, the approach and interpretation advanced above.

First, it is largely unknown how the developments, trends, and discussions that have been discerned in this book at the national level affected local NPB branches, and how these branches related to municipal life.¹⁶ Second, modernist discontentment with the religious 'neutrality' on which political liberalism and general associations were based on the one hand, and pillarisation on the other, suggests taking a closer look at modernist involvement in political parties other than liberal and socialist ones, most notably single-issue parties such as the *Plattelandersbond* and fascist parties in the inter-war period.¹⁷ Third, because modernist opinion leaders were almost without exception ministers, and women only entered the ministry in modernist circles as of 1911, the role of gender in the modernist movement could not be given an exhaustive treatment in this book. The relationship of this movement and its bourgeois morals to first-wave feminism is a topic that deserves particular attention.¹⁸ Fourth, this book on liberal Protestantism calls for a thorough comparison

16 The few studies that do (briefly) discuss the development of NPB branches in relation to municipal life are: Wolffram, *Bezwaarden en verlichten*; Van Miert, *Wars van clubgeest en partijzucht*; Jonker, *Macht en armoede aan de rivier*. Reconstructions of local modernist networks can be found in: Cossee, 'De Protestantenbond op Tholen'; Houkes, 'Vrijzinnige netwerken in Groningen (1867-1900)'.

17 There seems to have been a correlation between the rise of the *Plattelandersbond* and electoral concentrations of modernists. See: Klijnsma, *Om de democratie*, 292. On Menonites and fascism, see: G.D. Homan, 'Nederlandse doopsgezinden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog', *Doopsgezinde Bijdragen. Nieuwe reeks* XXI (1995), 165-197; G.G. Hoekema, 'Idealisten en baasjes met oogkleppen voor. Voorgangers van doopsgezinde gemeenten die van 1933 tot 1945 aangesproken werden door het gedachtegoed van de NSB of tijdens de oorlog meewerkten met de Duitse bezetter', *Ibid.* XLI (2015), 183-246.

18 M.P.A. de Baar, 'Cherchez la femme. . . Een blinde vlek in de VNK-bundels?', in: Abels et al. (eds.), *Terug naar Gouda*, 29-40, here 40. A connection between liberal Protestantism and first-wave feminism is suggested in: U. Jansz, *Denken over sekse in de eerste feministische golf* (Amsterdam 1990), 198.

with Roman Catholic modernism, as outlined by Van der Wall in a 2006 publication.¹⁹ Finally, the interrelationship between the Dutch modernist movement and similar groups elsewhere can be further explored by approaching the latter as discourse communities as well. Moreover, about Dutch liberal Protestant 'diaspora' communities, particularly in the Dutch East Indies, little is known.²⁰

Themes such as these need to be addressed in order to rectify liberal Protestants' absence in (Dutch) historiography. In the theatre of history, the play on Dutch Protestantism cannot be properly performed as long as some of its characters are missing.

19 Van der Wall, 'Protestants en rooms-katholiek modernisme', 75-76. See also: F. Pijper, *Het modernisme en andere stroomingen in de Katholieke Kerk* (Amsterdam 1921); Ch.E. Smit, "De moderne theoloog stelt zich hier aan als een kleine paus." Aspecten van het discours tussen protestantse modernen en rooms-katholieken, 1865-1870', in: Mikkers and Smit (eds.), *Tussen Augustinus en atheïsme*, 109-123.

20 The history of the Dutch modernist diaspora community in Grand Rapids is dealt with in: W. Langerwey, 'Voices from the Free Congregation at Grand Rapids, Michigan. An Introduction to the Holland Unitarian Church 1885-1918', in: T.J. Broos (ed.), *Publications of the American Association for Netherlandic Studies. Papers from the Third Interdisciplinary Conference on Netherlandic Studies, held at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 12-14 June 1986* (Boston and London 1988), 125-138; Van den Boogaard, *De religieuze rebellen van de Vrije Gemeente*, 169-182.

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De Dageraad. Tijdschrift toegewijd aan de verspreiding van waarheid en verlichting in den geest van de natuurlijke godsdienst en zedeleer
De Gids
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tevens en vrijmoedig verhandeld worden, benevens mengelwerk, tot fraaije letteren,
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² Referring to p. 15, note 54.

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6 Recent Doctoral Dissertations on Dutch Liberal Protestantism³

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³ Referring to p. 17, note 62.

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7 Antimodernist Orthodox Protestant Brochures, 1860s-1870s⁴

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- Cramer, J., *De illusie der moderne richting. Een woord naar aanleiding van de jongsten strijd tusschen prof. J.H. Scholten en dr. A. Pierson* (Amsterdam 1867).
- De modernen aan de pols gevoeld* (Arnhem 1866).
- Doedes, J.I., *De zoogenaamde moderne theologie eenigszins toegelicht* (Utrecht 1861).
- Douwes, Jr., J., *Het beginsel der moderne theologie, zooals het is voorgesteld door een van hare nieuwste woordvoerders* (Groningen 1861).
- Een lid van de Ecclesia pressa, *De moderne theologie voor het volk verklaard. Een woord door de Luthersche beweging, na het beroep van ds. Loman, van Vlissingen, uitgelokt* (Amsterdam 1863).

⁴ Referring to p. 119, note 11.

- Felix, B.C., *Brieven aan een burgerman over en tegen de moderne richting* (Amsterdam 1868).
- Gonggrijp, H.G., *Is de uitlegging van het Evangelie, volgens de moderne rigting, geschikt voor de behoeften van het hart?* (Franeker 1864).
- Hofstede de Groot, P., *De moderne theologie in Nederland. Volgens de hoofdwerken harer beroemdste voorstanders* (Groningen 1870).
- Hofstede de Groot, P., *De vraag: Waarom leggen verscheidene predikanten der moderne rigting hunne bediening neder? beantwoord door eenige der beroemdste godgeleerden van die rigting* (Groningen 1865).
- Hofstede de Groot, P., and Herwerden, C.H. van, *Over moderne theologie. Mededeelingen en beschouwingen omtrent eenige van hare belangrijkste voortbrengselen* (Groningen 1863).
- Holkema, P., *De zwakheid en onhoudbaarheid van de bewijsvoering der modernen op het Christologisch standpunt tegenover de kracht van het Evangelisch geloof. Eene voorlezing* (Joure [1868]).
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- Komen de leeringen van modernen overeen, met hetgeen God, in zijn woord, zegt?* (Wageningen 1869).
- Kuyper, A., *Het modernisme, een fata morgana op christelijk gebied* (Amsterdam 1871).
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8 Publications on Local Remonstrant Congregations⁵

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- Cossee, E.H., et al., *Eenheid in het nodige. Gedenkboekje, samengesteld t.g.v. het 80-jarig bestaan der remonstrants gereformeerde gemeente te Dordrecht* (Dordrecht 1977).
- Delhez, F., *Remonstrantsch gereformeerde gemeente te Dordrecht, 1897-1922. Iets uit het leven der gemeente* (s.l. [1922]).
- Eck, F. van, *Huis van steen en woord. Remonstrantse kerk 1901-2001* (Dordrecht 2001).
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- Huizinga, E., et al. (eds.), *Arminianen in Groningerland. Terugblik en uitzicht* (Groningen 1978).
- Laman Trip-Kleinstarink, E.W.H., *Kerkelijk leven in Arnhem. Historisch-sociografische schets, in het bijzonder van de remonstrants gereformeerde gemeente* (s.l. 1958).

⁵ Referring to p. 193, note 67.

- Maronier, J.H., *Wat willen de remonstranten? Toespraak, gehouden in de Remonstrantsche Vereeniging te Doesborgh den 18 November 1877* (Doesburg 1877).
- Meinema, J., and Puister, T.E., “. . . een in waarheid vrijzinnige gemeente”. *Beknopte geschiedschrijving van de remonstrantse gemeente Groningen* (Groningen 2003).
- Tiele, C.P., and Mosselmans, B.C.J., *Toespraken, gehouden bij de inwijding der Remonstrantsche Gemeente te Groningen, op Zondag 28 Juli 1878* (Groningen 1878).
- Tiele, C.P., and Slotemaker, L.H., *Toespraken, gehouden bij de inwijding der Remonstrantsche Gemeente te Arnhem, op Zondag 7 April 1878* (Arnhem 1878).
- Wilzen-Bruins, E.J., *De remonstrantse kerk te Meppel* (Meppel 1945).

9 Modernist Brochures, 1860s-1870s⁶

- Adres aan den bijzonderen kerkeraad der Nederduitsche Herv. Gemeente te 's-Gravenhage* (The Hague 1864).
- Bell, F.W.B. van, et al., *Een woord tot alle vrijzinnigen onder de leden der Nederduitsche Hervormde Gemeente te Amsterdam* (Amsterdam 1871).
- Boneval Faure, R.T.H.P.L.A. van, *Rechtzinnigen en modernen in eene en dezelfde kerk. Openbare brief aan prof. J.I. Doedes* (Leiden 1874).
- Bosch Kemper, J. de, *Het toezicht op de Evangelieprediking door kerkbesturen. Een voordracht en voorstel in de vergadering van de synode der Evangelisch Luthersche Kerk in het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden* (Amsterdam 1872).
- Fleischer, D.J., and Posthuma, S.M., *Eene stem uit het volk, ten gunste der moderne richting en harer leeraars* (Nijmegen 1867).
- Heijen, H., *Het recht van bestaan der modernen als kerkelijke partij. Adres aan de hoogerw. leden der synode van de Evangelisch Luthersche Kerk in ons vaderland, ter zake van de formule tot onderteekening bij de toelating der kandidaten in de theologie tot de predikdienst* (The Hague 1873).
- Hoevers, W., *Het regt van een modernen theoloog tot de Evangeliebediening in de Nederlandsche Hervormde Kerk. Antwoord aan ds. J.H. Gunning jr., tevens met het og op het adres des kerkeraad van de Ned. Herv. gemeente te 's-Gravenhage, aan de algemene synode, tegen de moderne theologie* (The Hague 1864).
- Jorissen, E.J.P., *De moderne theologie op den kansel veroordeeld. Eene kritiek* (Groningen 1862).
- Loman, W.F., *De verloren zoon en de Evang. Luth. Synode van 1873. Brief aan ds. Ludw. C. Lentz, vice-voorzitter dier Synode en Hoogduitsch predikant te Amsterdam, naar aanleiding van zijn advies, onder den titel “Heeft de moderne richting aanspraak op kerkelijke wettiging?”* (Amsterdam 1873).

⁶ Referring to p. 195, note 75.

Réville, A., *Nous maintiendrons. Lettre au Dr. A. Pierson à l'occasion de ses adieux à sa dernière église* (Arnhem 1865) / *Wij blijven. Brief aan dr. A. Pierson, naar aanleiding van zijn schrijven "Aan zijne laatste gemeente"* (Arnhem 1865).

10 Brochures in NPB Series, 1900s-1910s⁷

- Bähler, L.A., *De levende God* (Baarn 1911).
- Bakel, H.A. van, *De oorsprong van den christelijken doop* (Baarn 1913).
- Bakels, H., *Mensch of dier?* (Baarn 1909).
- Bakker, S.K., *Als er een God was . . . Enkele gedachten over het lijden en het kwaad in de wereld* (Baarn 1913).
- Bakker, S.K., *Godsdienst en godsdiensten* (Baarn 1912).
- Bakker, S.K., *Over de zekerheid van Gods bestaan. Een populaire beschouwing* (Baarn 1909).
- Bakker-Germs, A., *Godsdienst in het huisgezin* (Baarn 1910).
- Bergh, I. van den, *Over gebedsverhooring* (Baarn 1910).
- Bergh van Eysinga, G.A. van den, *Kautsky's opvatting van het oudste Christendom aan de bronnen getoetst* (Baarn 1911).
- Bergh van Eysinga-Elias, J. van den, *Eene historisch-materialistische bestrijding van het christendom* (Baarn 1910).
- Binnerts Sz., A., *Nieuw-gereformeerde en moderne theologie. Beschouwingen naar aanleiding van de rectorale oratie van prof. Bavinck, ter moderne theologenvergadering voorgedragen en aangevuld met een naschrift* (Baarn 1912).
- Bleeker, J.J., *Wat is het doel van het leven?* (Baarn 1912).
- Bruining, A., *Het geloof aan God en het zedelijk leven. Gedachten over onafhankelijke zedeleer* (Baarn 1909).
- Bruining, A., *Het voortbestaan der menselijke persoonlijkheid na den dood* (Assen 1904).
- Bruining Jz., J., *De verhouding tusschen geloofsleven en geschiedenis* (Baarn 1913).
- Bruining Jz., J., *Godsdienst en clericalisme* (Baarn 1913).
- Bruining Jz., J., *School en godsdienstige opvoeding* (Assen 1907).
- Bruining Jz., J., *Wat wij wel en wat wij niet gelooven* (Baarn 1910).
- Bruins, J.A., *De wonderverhalen der evangeliën* (Baarn 1909).
- Cannegieter, H.G., *Godsdienst en beeldendienst* (Baarn 1912).
- Cannegieter, H.G., *Moeten wij nog bidden?* (Baarn 1910).
- Chavannes, C.G., *Hel en hemel* (Baarn 1910).
- Drijver, D., *Lijkverbranding* (Baarn 1914).

⁷ Referring to p. 282, note 18.

- Eerdmans, B.D., *Het Roomsche gevaar* (Baarn 1913).
- Eerdmans, B.D., *"Moderne" orthodoxie of "orthodox" modernisme* (Baarn 1911).
- Eisma, H., *Naar de kerk?! Een leekenwoord* (Baarn 1913).
- Eldering, P., *Het eeuwig leven* (Baarn 1914).
- Geertsma, K., *God en de oorlog* (Baarn 1914).
- Geertsma, K., *Over godsdienstige opvoeding* (Baarn 1910).
- Graaf, H.T. de, *Geloof en misdaad* (Baarn 1914).
- Graaf, H.T. de, *Gelooven en weten* (Baarn 1911).
- Groenewegen, H.Y., *De evolutieleer en het godsdienstig geloof* (Baarn 1909).
- Groenewoud Kzn., J., [H.G. Cannegieter], *De tempel des hemels* (Baarn 1914).
- Haverkamp, W., *Wij zijn niet geboren om te sterven* (Baarn 1912).
- Haverkamp, W., *Zondagsviering* (Zaltbommel 1915).
- Heering, G.J., *Gij zijt verantwoordelijk!* (Baarn 1910).
- Heering, G.J., *Het geloof in Gods voorzienigheid* (Baarn 1914).
- Heering, G.J., *Zonde en schuld naar christelijk besef* (Baarn 1912).
- Hille, J.J. van, *Over ascetisme* (Zaltbommel 1915).
- Hille, J.J. van, *Over de paedagogische waarde van de godsdienstige voorstellingen der modernen* (Baarn 1911).
- Hoeve, A.H. van der, *De invloed van de maatschappelijke omstandigheden op het geestelijk leven* (Baarn 1913).
- Hoeve, A.H. van der, *Zal de godsdienst verdwijnen? De beweringen van het historisch materialisme weêrlegd* (Baarn 1910).
- Hoog, I.M.J., *De doode letter* (Zaltbommel 1915).
- Hoog, I.M.J., *De voornaamste rechtsche- en middenrichtingen in het Nederlandsche protestantisme van onzen tijd. Orthodoxie, Groninger (evangelische) richting, gematigde orthodoxie, ethische richting* (Baarn 1914).
- Hooykaas, C.E., *Gemeenteleven* (Zaltbommel 1915).
- Hooykaas, C.E., *Wegwijzer door den Bijbel* (Baarn 1910).
- Hooykaas, C.E., *Wij modernen en de openbaring* (Baarn 1912).
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⁸ So-called '*tussenvoegsels*' such as '*van*', '*de*' and '*van de*' are considered integral parts of surnames in Dutch-speaking Belgium, but not in the Netherlands. For that reason, Flemish authors are alphabetically sorted according to the *tussenvoegsels* in their surnames (e.g. Van Houtte, J.A.), while Dutch authors are not. In the case of the latter, *tussenvoegsels* are put after the initials (e.g. Baar, M.P.A. de).

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